UNITY IN CHRIST
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"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me."
John 17:20, 21.

FOR several years I have thankfully received the text of the first Sabbath in the year from a venerable clergyman of a parish in the suburbs of our city. Spared by a gracious Providence, my good Brother has sent me, with his Christian salutations, these two verses for my subject. As we have enjoyed together for several years a true communion of spirit in the things of God, I can only hope that until one or the other of us shall be taken up to dwell above, we may walk together in holy service, loving each other fervently with a pure heart.

The most tender and touching prayer of the Master contained in this Chapter opens up to us His inmost heart. He was in Gethsemane, and His Passion was just commencing; He stood like a Victim at the altar, where the wood was already laid in order, and the fire was kindled to consume the Sacrifice. Lifting up His eyes to Heaven, with true filial love gazing upon His Father's Throne, and resting in humble confidence upon Heaven's strength, He looked away for a moment from the strife and resistance unto blood which was going on below. He asked for that upon which His heart was most fully set. He opened His mouth wide that His God might fill it. This prayer, I take it, was not only the casual expression of the Savior's desire at the last, but is a sort of model of the prayer which is incessantly going up from Him to the Eternal Throne. There is a difference in the mode of its offering; with sighs and tears He offered up His humble suit below, but with authority He now pleads enthroned in Glory; but the plea is the same; that which He desired while still below is that which His soul pants after now that He is taken up and is glorified above.

It is significant, Beloved, that the Savior should, in His last moments not only desire the salvation of all His people, but should plead for the unity of the saved ones, that being saved they might be united. It was not enough that each sheep should be taken from the jaw of the wolf; He would have all the sheep gathered into one fold under His own care. He was not satisfied that the members of His body should, each of them, be saved as the result of His death; He must have those members fashioned into a glorious body. Unity lying so very near the Savior's heart at such a time of overwhelming trial must have been held by Him to be priceless

beyond all price. It is of this unity that we shall speak this morning—on this wise—first of all, we will have a *little to say upon the unity desired;* then *upon the work necessary*—namely, that the chosen be gathered in; thirdly, *upon prayer offered;* fourthly, *upon the result anticipated;* and fifthly, *upon the question suggested.*

I. First, then, UPON THE UNITY DESIRED.

These words of the Savior have been perverted to the doing of a world of mischief. Ecclesiastics have fallen asleep, which, indeed, is their ordinary condition; and while asleep they have dreamed a dream—a dream founded upon the letter of the Savior's words of which they discern not the spiritual sense. They have proved in their own case, as has been proved in thousands of others, that the letter kills, and only the Spirit gives life. Falling asleep, I say, these ecclesiastics have dreamed of a great confederation presided over by a number of ministers, these again governed by superior officers, and these again by others, and these topped at last by a supreme visible head who must be either a person or a council—this great confederacy, containing within itself kingdoms and nations, becomes so powerful as to work upon States, to influence politics, to guide councils, and even to gather together and to move armies. True, the shadow of the Savior's teaching, "My kingdom is not of this World," must have caused an occasional nightmare in the midst of their dream, but they dreamed on; and what is worse, they turned the dream into a reality, and the time was when the professed followers of Christ were all one, when looking north, south, east, west—from the center at the Vatican—one united body covered all Europe!

And what was the result? Did the world believe that God had sent Christ? The world believed the very opposite. The world was persuaded that God had nothing to do with that great crushing, tyrannous, superstitious, ignorant thing which called itself Christianity; and thinking men became infidels, and it was the hardest possible thing to find a genuine intelligent Believer north, south, east, or west. All professors were one, but the world believed not; the fact being that this was not the unity which Jesus had so much as thought of—it was never His intention to set up a great united body to be called a Church which should dominate and lord everywhere over the souls of men. He never intended a Church within its ranks, kings, princes and statesmen who might be worldly, ungodly, hateful, sensual, and devilish. It was never Christ's design to set up a conscience-crushing engine of uniformity; and so the great man-devised machine, when it was brought to perfection, and set to work with the greatest possible vigor, instead of working out that the world should believe that the Father had sent Christ, worked out just this—that the world did not believe anything at all, but became infidel, licentious, and rotten at the core, and the system had to be abated as a common nuisance, and something better brought into the world to restore morality. Yet people dream that dream still—even good people do so. The Puritans, after they had been hunted and hauled to prison in this country, fled to New England, and no sooner had they

seated themselves upon the shore than they began to say, "We must all be one; there must be no schism," and the big whip was brought out for the Quaker's back, and the manacles for the Baptist's bleeding wrists, because these men, somehow or other, would not be one after this kind of fashion, but would think for themselves and obey God rather than man. Nowadays Dr. Pusey dreams that the Anglican and the Russian Church may be united, and then perhaps the Romish may chime in—and so once more all may be one. A mere dream! A mere fantasy of a kindly but whimsical brain! If it should ever come to be a reality it would prove to be an upas tree, at the roots of which every honest man must at once lay his axe.

But what did the Savior mean, "That they all may be *one;* as You, Father, are in Me"? We must begin at the beginning. *What were the elements of this unity which Christ so anxiously desired?* The answer is very distinctly given us in this Chapter. The unity was to be composed of the people who are here called "they," "that *they* all may be one." Will you let your eyes run down the Chapter to see who they are? Look in the second verse: "That He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him." The unity then proposed is of persons specially given to Jesus by the Father. Not then of all men who happen to dwell in any particular province, district, or city, but a unity of persons who have received, not common life as all have—but *eternal life*. Special persons, then, who have been quickened by God the Holy Spirit, and have been brought into vital union with the Person of the Lord Jesus are to be one. Further, they are described in the sixth verse as persons to whom God's name has been manifested; people who have seen what others never saw, and have beheld what others cannot know. They are men given out of the world, so the verse tells us—chosen men, taken out from the ordinary mass—not, then, the multitude; not kingdoms, states, empires, but selected persons. They are persons who have been schooled, and have learned unusual lessons—"Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You," and they have learned their lesson well, for we find it written, "They have kept Your Word; they have believed that You did send Me." They are described in the ninth verse as being prayed for by Christ in a sense in which He never prays for the world at all. They are people, according to the 10th verse, in whom God is glorified; in whom the name of Jesus shines with resplendent luster.

Look the whole Chapter through, and you will discover that the unity which the Master intended was that of *chosen persons* who by the Holy Spirit conferring life upon them are led to believe in Jesus Christ; they are spiritual-minded men who live in the realm of spirit, prize spiritual things, and form a confederacy and a kingdom which is spiritual and not of this world. Here is the secret. Carnal minds hear that Jesus is to wear a crown of pearls; they find pearls in shells, they try to join the oyster shells together, and what strange thing they make! But Jesus will have no union of the shells, the shells must be struck off as worthless things; the jewels and the jewels only are to be joined together. It is rumored

that the King is to wear a crown, and that pure gold is to form that brilliant circlet; straightway men bring their huge nuggets, and would fashion the diadem of masses of rock, earth, quartz, and I know not what. But the King wears no such crown as that—He will refine the gold, He will melt away the earth, the crown is to be made of the pure gold, not of the material with which that gold happens to be united. The one Church of God—of what is it composed then? Is it composed of the Church of England, the Congregational Union, the Wesleyan Conference, and the Baptist body? No, it is not. Is not, then, the Church of England a part of the Church of Christ, and the Baptist denomination a part? No, I deny that these bodies, as such, unrefined and in the gross, are a part of the great unity for which Jesus prayed; but there are Believers united with the Church of England who are a part of the body of Christ, and there are Believers in all denominations of Christians, yes, and many in no visible Church at all, who are in Christ Jesus, and consequently in the great unity. The Church of England is not a part of Christ's true body, nor any other denomination as such. The spiritual unity is made up of spiritual men, separated, picked out, cleared away from all the mass with which they happen to be united. I have spoken very boldly perhaps, and may be misunderstood; but I mean this, that you cannot take out any visible Church, however pure, and say that as it stands it belongs to the spiritual unity for which Jesus prayed. There are in the visible Churches a certain number of God's Elect ones, and these are of the body of Jesus Christ; but their fellow professors, if unconverted, are not in the mystical union. Christ's body is not made up of denominations, nor of presbyteries, nor of Christian societies; it is made up of saints chosen of God from before the foundation of the world, redeemed by blood, called by His Spirit, and made one with Jesus.

But now, passing on, *what is the bond which keeps these united ones together?* Among others, there is the bond of the *same origin.* Every person who is a partaker of the Life of God has sprung from the same Divine Father. The Spirit of God has quickened all the faithful alike. No matter that Luther may be very dissimilar from Calvin; Luther is made and created a new creature in Christ Jesus by that same fiat which created Calvin. No matter that Juan de Valdes, in the same age, may hide himself in the Court of Spain, and scarcely be recognized as a Believer, yet when we turn over his volume today we find in his, *One Hundred Considerations,* the very same spirit of Divine Grace which breathes in Calvin's *Institutes,* or in Luther's *Bondage of the Human Will.* And we discover there the same life in each—they have been quickened by the same Spirit, and made to live by the same energy; and though they knew it not, they were still one. No more, all true Believers are supported by the *same strength.* The life which makes vital the prayer of a Believer today is the same life which quickened the cry of a Believer 2,000 years ago; and if this world shall last as long as another thousand years, the same Spirit which made the tear trickle from the eyes of a penitent then, is that which this day makes us bow before God Most

High. Moreover, all Believers have the *same aim* and objective. Every true saint is shot from the same bow, and is speeding towards the same target. There may be, there will be much that is not of God about the man, much of human infirmity, defilement and corruption; but still the inward spirit within him which God has put there, is forcing its way to the same perfection of holiness, and is meanwhile seeking to glorify God.

Above all, the *Holy Spirit,* who indwells in every Believer, is the true fountain of oneness. Some of the Christians in this land of ours 200 years ago, were strangely different in outward manners from their Brothers and Sisters of 1866; but when we talk with them through their old folios and books, we find, if we are the Lord's people, that we are quite at home with them. Though the manifestation may vary, yet the same Spirit of God works the same Graces, the same virtues, the same excellencies, and thus helps all saints to prove themselves to be of one tribe. I meet an Englishman anywhere in the wide world over, and I recognize in him some likeness to myself; there is some characteristic or other about him by which his nationality is betrayed; and so I meet a Christian 500 years back in the midst of Romanism and darkness, but his speech betrays him; if my soul shall traverse space in 100 years to come, although Christianity may have assumed another outward garb and fashion, I shall still recognize the Christian, I shall still detect the Galilean brogue, there will be something which will show to me that if I am an heir of Heaven I am one with the past and one with the future—yes, one with all the saints of the living God. This is a very different bond from that which men try to impose upon each other in order to create union. They put straps around the outside, they tie us together with many knots, and we feel uneasy; but God puts a Divine Life inside of us, and then we wear the sacred bonds of Love with ease. If you get the limbs of a dead man you can tie them together, and then if you send the body on a journey and the carriage jolts, a leg will slip out of its place, and an arm may be dislocated. But get a living man, and you may send him where you will, and the ligatures of life will prevent his dropping asunder. In all the truly Elect children of God who are called, and chosen, and faithful, there is a bond of Divine mysterious Love running right through the whole, and they are one and must be one, the Holy Spirit being the life which unites them.

There are tokens which evidence this union, and prove that the people of God are one. We hear much moaning over our divisions. There may be some who are to be deplored among ecclesiastical confederacies, but in the spiritual Church of the Living God, I am really at a loss to discover the divisions which are so loudly proclaimed. It strikes me that the tokens of union are much more prominent than the tokens of division. But what are they? First there is a union *in judgment* upon all vital matters. I converse with a spiritual man, and no matter what he calls himself, when we talk of sin, pardon, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and such like themes, we are agreed. We speak of our blessed Lord. My friend says that Jesus is fair and lovely—so do I. He says that he has nothing else to

trust to but the precious blood; nor have I anything else. I tell him that I find myself a poor, weak creature; he laments the same. I live in his house a little while—we pray together at the family altar, you could not tell which it was that prayed, Calvinist or Arminian, we pray so exactly alike, and when we open the hymn book, very likely if he happens to be a Wesleyan he chooses to sing, "Jesus, lover of my soul." I will sing it, and then next morning he will sing with me, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me." If the Spirit of God is in us, we are all agreed upon great points. Let me say that among true saints the points of union, even in matters of judgment, are ninety-nine, and the points of difference are only as one. In *experimental points*, as face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man. Only get upon experimental topics concerning soul-dealings with God—leave the letter and get to the spirit, crack the shells and eat the kernel of spiritual truth, and you will find that the points of agreement between genuine Christians are something marvelous. But this union is to be seen most plainly in union of *heart*. I am told that Christians do not love each other. I am very sorry if that is true, but I rather doubt it, for I suspect that those who do not love each other are not Christians. Where the Spirit of God is there must be love, and if I have once known and recognized any man to be my Brother in Christ Jesus, the love of Christ compels me no more to think of him as a stranger or foreigner, but a fellow citizen with the saints.

Now I hate High Churchism as my soul hates Satan; but I love George Herbert, although George Herbert is a desperately High Churchman. I hate his High Churchism, but I love George Herbert from my very soul, and I have a warm corner in my heart for every man who is like he is. Let me find a man who loves my Lord Jesus Christ as George Herbert did, and I do not ask myself whether I shall love him or not; there is no room for question, for I cannot help myself; unless I can leave off loving Jesus Christ, I cannot cease loving those who love Him! Here is George Fox, the Quaker, a strange sort of body it is true, going about the world making much noise and stir; but I love the man with all my soul, because he had an awful respect for the Presence of God, and an intense love for everything spiritual. How is it that I cannot help loving George Herbert and George Fox, who are in some things, complete opposites? Because they both loved the Master. I will defy you, if you have any love to Jesus Christ, to pick or choose among His people; you may hate as much as you will the shells in which the pearls lie, and the dross with which the gold is mixed, but the true, the precious blood-bought gold, the true pearl, Heaven-dyed, you must esteem. You must love a spiritual man wherever you may find him. Such love exists among the people of God, and if anybody says it does not, I can only fear that the speaker is unfit to judge. If I come across a man in whom there is the Spirit of Christ, I *must* love him, and if I did not I should prove I was not in the unit at all.

Oneness in judgment, in experience, and in heart are some of the evidences of this union, but if you want more plain and palpable union, which even carnal eyes can see, note the unity of Christian *prayer*. Oh,

how slight the difference there! Well-taught Believers address the Throne of Grace in the same style, whatever may be the particular form which their Church organization may have assumed. So is it with *praise*. There, indeed, we are as one, and our music goes up with sweet accord to the Throne of Heavenly Grace. Beloved, we are one in action; true Christians everywhere are all doing the same work. Here is a Brother preaching; I do not care about that white thing he has on, but if he is a genuine Christian, he is preaching Christ Crucified; and here am I, and he may not like me because I have not that white rag on, but still I delight to preach Christ Crucified. When you come to the real lifework of the Christian, it is the same in every case, it is holding up the Cross of Christ! "Oh," you say, "but there are many Christians in the world preaching this and that and the other." I am saying nothing of them or about them; I am saying nothing about their ecclesiastical belongings; I am saying nothing about those who merely cling to the Church; I am speaking of the *Elect*, the precious ones, the simpleminded Christ-taught men and women, and their motive of action is the same, and there is among them a true union which is the answer to our Lord's prayer. He did not plead in vain—what He sought He has obtained—and the truly quickened are this day one, and shall evermore remain so.

I think I hear someone saying, "But I cannot see this unity." My answer is, One reason may be because of your lack of information. I saw a large building the other day being erected; I do not know that it was any business of mine, but I did puzzle myself to make out how that would make a complete structure; it seemed to me that the gables would come in so very awkwardly. But I dare say if I had seen a plan there might have been some central tower or some combination by which the wings, one of which appeared to be rather longer than the other, might have been brought into harmony. The architect, doubtless, had a unity in his mind which I had not in mine. So you and I have not the necessary information as to what the Church is to be. The unity of the Church is not to be seen by you today—do not even think it; the plan is not worked out yet. God is building over yonder, and you only see the foundation; in another part the top stone is all but ready, but you cannot comprehend it. Shall the Master show you His plan? Is the Divine Architect bound to take you into His studio to show you all His secret motives and designs? Not so; wait awhile and you will find that all these diversities and differences among spiritually-minded men, when the master plan comes to be worked out, are different parts of the grand whole, and you, with the astonished world, will then know that God has sent the Lord Jesus! I go into a great factory; there is a wheel spinning a way in which it is perfectly indifferent and careless of every other wheel; there is another wheel going in an opposite direction; all sorts of motions concentric and eccentric; and I say, "What an extraordinary muddle this all seems!" Just so! I do not understand the machinery. So when I go into the great visible Church of God, if I look with the eyes of my spirit I can see the inner harmony; but if with these eyes I look upon the great outward Church I

cannot see it, nor will it ever be seen till the hidden Church shall be made manifest at the appearing of the Lord.

The reason why you do not see the unity of the Church may be because of the present roughness of the material. See yonder a number of stones—here, a number of trees; I cannot see the unity. Of course not. When these trees are all cut into planks, when these stones are all squared, then you may begin to see them as a whole. The various stones of the Divine building of the Church are all out of shape at present; they are not polished. We shall never be one till we are sanctified. The unity of Christ is a unity of *holy*, not *unholy* beings; and as we each of us grow more and more prepared by the work of Christ for our own place, we shall discover more and more the unity of the Church. Perhaps, too, let me say, we cannot see the unity of the Church because we ourselves cannot see anything. Is that a harsh saying? Who can bear it? There are thousands of professors who cannot see anything. Do not suppose, dear Friends, that the unity of the Church is a thing that is to be seen by these eyes of ours. Never! Everything spiritual is spiritually discerned. You must get spiritual eyes before you can see it. Many people say there is no unity. I would be astonished if there were any which they could see or feel. They are not in Christ themselves; their hearts have never felt what spiritual life means; how should they be able to understand that into which they have never entered?

See what carnal-mindedness does with Christ's teaching. Christ teaches His people that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood. Carnal-Mind Says, "I know what that means." And straightway he runs to the pantry, and brings out a loaf of bread and a cup of wine. Spiritual men weep at such ignorance. Jesus says, "That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me." "I know what that means," says Carnal-Mind—"They are all to worship after the same fashion, and use the same ritual." That is all poor Carnal-Mind knows about it; he confuses the outward with the inward, and misses the Lord's meaning. But, Beloved, you know better than this! You do know, I trust, and feel this very day in your soul that the true saints of the Living God are one with each other at this very moment. You understand that they recognize and discover this unity in proportion as they become like their Lord and Master, and are conformed to His image, and made fit for the place which they are to occupy. Just as Professor Owen can take up a bone, and from that one bone can discover the whole structure of the entire animal, I do not doubt but what there is a mutual dependence and consistency between every Christian and his fellows, so that if we understood the science of spiritual comparative anatomy, as we may do in Heaven, we would be able to form from any one Christian the fashion of the entire Church of God from the mutual dependence of one upon the other! But it would not be according to the fashion of the beast that was, and now is, and is yet to come, which calls itself the Church of Christ, and is nothing better than Antichrist; it would take the fashion of the Lord from Heaven, of whose body we are members.

II. I have talked too long upon this matter of unity to spare much time for the other points, and therefore only a hint at them. The second head was to be, THE WORK THAT IS TO BE DONE BEFORE THIS UNITY CAN BE COMPLETE.

There are many chosen ones who have not yet believed in Jesus Christ, and the Church cannot be one till these are saved. Here is work to be done—work to be done by instruments. These chosen ones are to believe—that is a work of Divine Grace, but they are to believe through our word. Brothers, if you would promote the unity of Christ's Church, look after His lost sheep, seek out wandering souls. If you ask what is to be your work, the answer is in the text—it is to be concerning Christ. They are to believe in Him. Every soul that believes in Christ is built into the great Gospel unity in its measure, and you will never see the Church as a whole while there is one soul left unsaved for whom the Savior shed His precious blood. Go out and teach His Word! Tell of the Doctrines of Grace as He has given you ability. Hold up Christ before the eyes of men, and you will be the means in God's hand of bringing them to believe in Him—and so the Church shall be built up and made one. Here is work for the beginning of the year! Here is work till the end of the year! Do not sit down and scheme and plot, and plan how this denomination may melt into the other; you leave that alone. Your business is to go and—

"Tell to sinners round
What a Savior you have found,"

for that is God's way of using you to complete the unity of His Church. Unless these are saved, the Church is not perfect. That is a wonderful text that, "They without us cannot be made perfect." That is to say, saints in Heaven cannot be perfect unless we get there. What? The blessed saints in Heaven not perfect unless the rest of Believers come there? So the Scripture tells us, for they would be a part of the body and not a whole body—they cannot be perfect as a flock unless the rest of the sheep come there. They beckon us from the battlement of Heaven and say to us, "Come up here, for without you we cannot be one as Jesus Christ is One with His Father. We are an imperfect body till you come." And we, from our position of Grace, turn round to the sinful world, and we say to the chosen of God from among that sinful world, "Come to Jesus! Trust Jesus! Believe in Him! For without you we cannot be perfect, nor can the heavenly ones themselves be, for there must be one complete Church! The city must be walled all round, and if there is one gap in the wall the city will not be one. Come, then, put your trust in Jesus, that His Church may be one."

III. The third point was to be, HERE IS PRAYER OFFERED.

Beloved, Christ prays for the unity of His Church, that all saints who have gone to Heaven in days gone by, that all saints who live now, that all who ever live may be brought into the unity of the one life in Himself. I fear we do not attach enough importance to the power of Christ's prayer. We think of Joshua fighting in the valley, but we forget our Moses with hands outstretched upon the hill. We are looking at the wheels of the

machine—to go back to our old figure—and we are thinking that this wheel, and that, and the other, is needing more oil, or not working exactly to its point. Ah, but let us never forget the engine, that mysterious motive force which is hidden and concealed, upon which the action of the whole depends. Christ's prayer for His people is the great motive force by which the Spirit of God is sent to us, and the whole Church is kept filled with life; and the whole of that force is tending to this one thing—to unity; it is removing everything which keeps us from being one, it is working with all its Divine Omnipotence to bring us into a visible unity when Christ shall stand in the latter days upon the earth. Beloved, let us have hope for sinners yet unconverted; Christ is praying for them! Let us have hope for the entire body of the faithful; Christ is praying for their unity, and what He prays for must be effected. He never pleads in vain. He prays that the Church may be one, and it is one; He prays that they may be perfect and complete, and it shall be amidst eternal hallelujahs.

IV. Then, there was THE RESULT ANTICIPATED FROM THE WHOLE. "That the world may believe that You have sent Me." The effect of sight of the complete Church upon human minds will be overwhelming. Angels and principalities will look at Christ's perfect Church with awe. They will all exclaim, "What a marvel! What a wonder! What a masterpiece of Divine Power and Wisdom!" When they saw the foundation laid in the precious blood of Christ, they gazed long and wistfully; but when they see the whole Church complete, every spire and pinnacle, and the great top-stone brought out with shouting, all built of precious jewels and pearls, fashioned like the similitude of a palace—why they will make Heaven ring again and again! When the world was made they sang for joy, but how shall the vaults of Heaven echo when the Church is all complete, and the New Creation shall have been perfected! What will be the effect upon men? Astonishment will be the effect upon angels, but what upon men? Why the world, that wicked world which rejected Christ, that wicked crucifying world which would have none of Him, and which now will have none of His people, that wicked world which hates His saints, and has strived with all its might to pluck down the walls of His Church, will believe, will be compelled to believe that God has sent His Son.

They will bite their tongues with rage! They will gnash their teeth with horror! But there will be no doubt about it. Do not suppose that the world will ever be convinced so as to believe in Christ, and to be saved by the unity of the Church. It is not anticipated in this Chapter that the world ever will be saved! That is not dreamed of the whole Chapter through—the world is spoken of as something for which Christ does not pray, whose enlightenment is not anticipated; but that world, though it weeps, and wails, and curses, and abhors, shall be made distinctly to recognize the Divinity of Christ's mission when it shall see the entire unity of the Church. Why, before my astonished gaze this morning there seems to me to rise up as from a great sea of confusion a wondrous

building. I see the first stone sunk into the depths of that sea dyed with blood, and I see the top of it just emerging above lofty waves of strife and confusion; and now I see other stones built on that, all of them dyed with blood—the first Apostles, all of them martyrs. I see stone rising upon stone as age succeeds age. At first nearly all the foundations are laid in the fair vermilion of martyrdom, but the structure rises—the stones are very different; they come from Asia, Africa, America, Europe; they are taken from among princes and from among peasants. These stones are very diverse. Perhaps while they were here they scarcely recognized that they belonged to the same building, but there they are—and for 1866 years that building goes on, and on, and on building, every stone being made ready. We know not how many more years that masterly edifice will take, but at the last, despite all the frowns of Hell, and all the power of devils, that edifice will be completed—not a single stone being lost, not one Elect child of God being absent—and not one of those stones having suffered any injury nor been put out of its place! And the whole so fair, so matchless, such a display of power and wisdom and love, that even the hateful ones whose hearts are hard as adamant against the Most High will be compelled to say God must have sent Christ! They cannot restrain that confession when all the Church shall be one as the Father is one with Christ. O happy day!

V. The concluding suggestion was to be this—ARE WE PARTS OF THAT GREAT UNITY?

There is the question. It is not this morning, Are you members of a Christian Church? "I know how you get at it," you say, "Well, a certain number of Churches are evangelical and orthodox; they make up orthodox Protestantism. Now, I am a Baptist. Very well. I am a Baptist, and the Baptist churches are orthodox, therefore I am a Christian. I am an Episcopalian, and Episcopacy is one branch of Protestantism. Very well, I am a Protestant, I am a Christian." Ah, that is your *carnal* way of talking! You may be very grievously mistaken if that is your argument. But if you can go another way to work and say, "I have received Eternal Life for I have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I am given of the Father unto Him." Why then, Beloved, you come at it directly. Being one with Christ, you are one with His people. But do not, when you are looking for this unity, look for an outward but for an inward thing. Do not look for a matter that is to be written on sheets of paper, on rolls and books—look for a bond written on hearts, and consciences, and souls. Do not be looking for all saints in one room, but in Christ; all living upon heavenly bread, and drinking of the wines on the lees well refined that come from Christ Jesus. Look for a spiritual union and you will find it; if you look for the other thing you will not find it, and if you did find it, it would be a great and awful thing from which you might pray God to deliver His Church.

As spiritual men look for spiritual unity—but first begin by asking whether you are spiritual yourselves. Have you been born into the family? Have you been washed with the blood? Have you passed from

death unto life? If not, even if you could be in the body, you would be as a dead substance in the body working a fester, a gangrene, necessitating pain and suffering—you would be a thing accursed, to be cast away. But are you alive by the Life of Christ? Does God dwell in you, and do you dwell in Him? Then, my dear Brother or Sister, give me your hand! Never mind about a thousand differences if you are in Christ and I am in Christ, we cannot be two, we must be one. Let us love each other fervently with a pure heart. Let us live on earth as those who are to live together a long eternity in Heaven. Let us help each other's spiritual growth. Let us aid each other as far as possible in every holy, spiritual enterprise which is for the promotion of the Kingdom of the Lord. And let us chase out of our hearts everything which would break the unity which God has established. Let us cast from us every false doctrine, every false thought of pride, enmity, envy, bitterness, that we, whom God has made one, may be one before men as well as before the eyes of the heart-searching God.

May the Lord bless us, dear Friends, as a Church, may He make us one, and keep us so; for it will be the dead stuff among us who will make the divisions. It is the living children of God who make the unity! It is the living ones who are bound together. There will be no fear about that—Christ's prayer takes care of us, that we shall be one. As for those of you who are joined with us in visible fellowship, and are not one with Christ, may the Lord save you with His great salvation, and His shall be the praise. Amen and Amen!

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OPEN HEART FOR THE GREAT SAVIOR
NO. 669

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 17, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12.

DIVINE Truth is one, but it is many-sided—when you have looked at it from one point of view you may reverse your position, and, though the Truth at which you look will be the same, you will marvel at its freshness as seen from another aspect. This morning we sought to show you how Jesus Christ received sinners [See Sermon #665, Volume 11—OPEN HOUSE FOR ALL COMERS—read/download, by God's Grace, all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons, and over 475 Spanish translations free of charge at www.spurgeongems.org.] Tonight it shall be our endeavor, as the Holy Spirit may enable us, to set forth how sinners receive Christ. It is perfectly true that the work of salvation lies first and mainly in Jesus receiving sinners to Himself to pardon, to cleanse, to sanctify, to preserve, to make perfect; but, at the same time, the sinner also receives Christ. There is an act on the sinner's part by which, being compelled by Divine Grace, he opens his heart to the admission of Jesus Christ, and Jesus enters in, and dwells in the heart, and reigns and rules there. To a gracious readiness of heart to entertain the Friend who knocks at the door, we are brought by God the Holy Spirit, and then He sups with us and we with Him.

We shall take, tonight, the view of the subject opened up before us by this text, and we shall begin *by simply and shortly describing how the sinner receives Christ.* Secondly, *the privilege, or power, which is conferred as the result of this reception of Christ.* And thirdly, *the great change which is involved in the fact that the sinner has received Christ, the fact that the sinner has been born-again from above, "not of the will of man, but of God."*

I. As briefly, then, as may be, and very simply indeed, we will describe WHAT IT IS FOR THE SINNER TO RECEIVE CHRIST.

This receiving Christ lies in several things. If a man would receive Christ he must, first of all, *receive Him in His Person as He is revealed in the Sacred Scriptures.* We are taught over and over again in Scripture that Jesus Christ is Immanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh, Jehovah's equal in fashion as a Man. The "WORD"—that "Word" of which it is said, "the Word was God"—was "made manifest" in flesh among men, and they "beheld His glory." Though He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," yet "He made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men." This was a new and startling Doctrine when first preached to heathen sages, that God should take humanity into so intimate a connection with Himself, as really and truly to be Man and God in the same Person, but it

is a Doctrine which must be received by you or else you cannot receive Christ. My Master will not be satisfied with the acknowledgment that His Character is lovely, His Doctrine pure, and His moral teaching super-excellent; He will not be content with your admission that He is a Prophet greater than any Prophet who ever came before or after Him; He will not rest satisfied with your admission that He is a Teacher sent from Heaven, and a Being who, on account of His virtues, is now peculiarly exalted in Heaven. All this is well, but it is not enough; you must also believe that He, who as Man was born of the Virgin, and was dandled upon her lap at Bethlehem, was as God none other than the Everlasting Lord, without beginning of days or end of years. You do not receive Christ in very deed and truth unless you believe in His proper Humanity and actual Godhead. Indeed, what is there for you to receive if you do not receive this? A Savior who is not Divine can be no Savior for us. How can a mere man, however eminent, deliver his fellows from sins such as yours and mine? How can he bear the burden of our guilt any more than we can ourselves bear it, if there is no more about him than about any other singularly virtuous man?

An angel would stagger beneath the load of human criminality, and much more would this be the case with even a *perfect* man. It needed those mighty shoulders—

"Which bear the earth's huge pillars up,"

to sustain the weight of human sin, and carry it into the wilderness of forgetfulness. You must receive Christ, in order to be saved by Him, as being God though Man.

But, my dear Friends, the mere belief of this Doctrine will not save anybody. There are many persons who have no need to fear the curses of the Athanasian Creed, nor the test of any other dogmatic way of expressing the fact of the Deity of Christ, but who are, nevertheless, very far from having received Christ Jesus Himself. A man may believe another to be a clever physician, and yet if he has a personal objection to him, he may refuse to receive him as such. If a man would receive Jesus rightly he must, in the next place, *accept Him in all His offices.* Our blessed Lord has three main offices. We find Him spoken of as "Prophet," "Priest," and "King," and men must be willing to take Him in each and all of the three. As a "Prophet" He teaches; what He has received of God He manifests to man. Am I willing to abide by His teaching? Do I take His words, and the words which He delivered by His Apostles, as being my directory and rule? I have a certain "doxy" which some call, "heterodoxy," but which, perhaps, I think to be "orthodoxy," but can I sincerely say that Jesus Christ is the Dictator of my orthodoxy? Do I take Him and His teaching to be the Truth by which I will abide? I find one Church holding one creed, and another Church holding another; do I look at all these standards of faith, and say of them, "I will follow them as far as they follow Christ, but neither to cardinal, bishop, synod, nor presbytery will I yield my faith"? I must first know whether the teaching of these men is in accordance with the teaching of Him whom I take to be my Master and my Teacher. Whether you are Calvinists, or Arminians, or anything else, dear Friends, be first and chiefly Christians—Christ-ians—

following Christ, receiving Him as the great Expositor to you of God, and of the great Truths of Revelation.

You will tell me you have your "bodies of divinity." There never was but one "body of divinity," and that was the "body" of the Man, Christ Jesus. Do you, abating all prejudices and self-formed opinions, receive our Lord as the great embodiment of Truth? The truest and the best system of theology is Jesus Christ; if you learn Him you have all Truth; you have nothing in excess, and nothing is omitted. He is the mold of Truth into which your prepared mind must be delivered to receive form and shape from His perfect Wisdom. Our hearts must receive Him as the Truth of God—

"You are the Truth, Your Word alone
True wisdom can impart.
To You I yield a willing mind,
And open all my heart."

If I receive Jesus as "Prophet," I must also take Him as *"Priest."* Herein, indeed, mainly lies His work. He came to purify men from sin; He stood before God offering a Sacrifice of Propitiation by which the guilt of man is removed. If I am not willing to receive Him as an Atoning Sacrifice, it is in vain for me to esteem Him as an Exemplar. His Cross of Atonement is inseparable from Himself; we must not only glory in Christ, but in Him Crucified, or else we shall surely be led forth with His enemies. Jesus must be my only ground of confidence for pardon; I must leave all human priests; I must have done with all trusting in priest-craft in any shape or form, whether it is in the Popish, Anglican, or any other fashion. I must neither make myself a priest, nor look upon any other man as being priest for me; but I must look upon Jesus Christ as being the only Priest in whom I confide—for, mark you—my Master claims the sole prerogative of Priesthood, and He only permits us, His people, to hold it as being in Him. And then we all, without exception, can say—"He has made us kings and priests unto God." But any special form of priesthood, peculiar to a certain class, is as alien to the spirit of Christianity as any dogma can possibly be. Every regenerated man becomes a priest by virtue of his union with Christ Jesus; but out of this union, it is treason to think of priesthood. You have not received Christ as the truly regenerated children of God have received Him unless you have accepted Him as the Anointed of God, the only Priest in whom to trust for the salvation of your soul—

"I other priests disclaim,
And laws, and offerings, too,
None but the bleeding Lamb
The mighty work can do.
He shall have all the praise, for He
Has loved, and lived, and died for me."

If I yield to the Lord Jesus Christ as Prophet and Priest, I must also give Him allegiance as my *"King."* He will reign where He purifies; He is not content to teach me, but He will also govern me. What do you say, my Hearers? Will you give yourself up, body and soul, to be ruled absolutely by Christ? Shall His Laws be binding upon your conscience, and carried out in your life? Do you say now, as before the Searcher of all hearts—"I desire in everything to be guided by Him, to submit myself to His absolute control"? You cannot really and truly receive the Savior

unless you are willing to do this. God has not sent His Son to be the messenger of sin! He will forgive your past offenses, but you must in the future submit yourselves to His gentle sway. "Kiss the Son," is one of the first Gospel commands—"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the Way when His wrath is kindled but a little." Remember the doom of those men who said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." Take His easy yoke, bow before His Throne of Love, touch the silver scepter of His Divine Grace. "He is your Lord, and worship Him." Crown Him in the palace of your soul, and set Him on the throne of your affections, for He is the King of angels, and should be the King of men—

"My King supreme, to You I bow,
A willing subject at Your feet.
All other Lords I disavow,
And to Your government submit.
My Savior King this heart would love,
And imitate the blest above."

Can we, dear Friends, thus accept Christ tonight, as Prophet, Priest, and King? If not, it is idle to talk about receiving Jesus Christ—we do not know Him, and are not known of Him! Our Lord is not to be divided and parceled out, you must have Him altogether or not at all; you must admit Him in all His offices, or He will not come under your roof.

But a man may agree to all this, and yet not receive Christ. All this is necessary as a steppingstone, but we must go on to something more. I must receive Jesus Christ *as being all this to me.* I must give *myself* to Him, and take Him as *mine*, as having near relationship to *me* and influence upon *me*. Another man's Christ will not save you, He must be *your* Christ. You have been accustomed to go to a place of worship, and you think, perhaps, "Well, I have gone with the rest, and therefore it is all right with me." And when you have heard a sermon, it has been addressed to the congregation in the plural, and you have been content to get a little share of it, but a very little one, indeed; now, you have never heard aright unless the Truth has come to you in the singular number, as to you alone. The gate of salvation is too narrow for two persons to go through arm-in-arm. You must all singly and separately pass the portal of Eternal Life just as you did the portal of natural life; you must feel not only that such and such things are true, but that they are true to *you*. If you receive our dear Redeemer as a Prophet, He begins to exercise that office by telling you that you are naturally lost, ruined, and undone. Do you believe this? Do you believe it to be true of *you*—not of chimney-sweeps, not of streetwalkers, not only of thieves in prison, but of *you*—that you are condemned under the Law of God? Do you take home the Doctrines of the Fall, and of the Depravity of Human Nature as being *true to you?*

He tells you next, that the only way to remove your sin is by His precious blood. Has that blood any reference *to you?* Have you trusted it? Has it washed *you* from sin? You have not taken the Lord Jesus as a Priest unless you have believed in His blood as presenting a Propitiation for *your* sins, and as cleansing *you* before the Holy Presence of the Most High God. You have not truly accepted Jesus as King unless you have personally submitted yourself to Him. In everything else people are so selfish that nothing but personal possession will content them; why are

they not thus careful in religious matters? They do not rejoice in the gold in the bank vaults—they aspire to have a good account at their own bank account. They do not consider themselves fed because there may happen to be a fine dinner provided at the London Tavern—they wish to see a feast on their own tables. But in eternal matters of infinitely more importance, men are, alas, so satisfied with generalities. "Yes! Oh yes, we are a Christian nation." Wonderfully so! "Of course, we, as a family always go to a place of worship; we are not heathens! We were born in a Christian land." A "Christian land" it is, we must all admit, a very Christian land! Very Christian, indeed! Look at our gin palaces, and our divorce courts! But what of that? How can national religion content private conscience any more than national wealth can console personal poverty? Still, the most of men care so little about their souls that they are satisfied with generalities; they do not come to particulars, to personalities. Why should they be so particular in other matters and not in religion? Why seek a personal interest in gold, and land, and estates, and then leave Heaven and the eternal world to be matters of universal speculation?

You have not received Christ truly if you have not gripped Him with your own hands, and claimed Him as your own. You must get right hold of Him for yourselves. There is no receiving a thing unless the thing received is held by the receiver. Water is poured into a vessel, and anything received is contained within the thing receiving it. So Christ Jesus must come right into you, into personal, conscious relationship with your own spirit so as to act upon you and influence you, or else you have not received Him. I hope I shall not make what is very plain, very difficult. One is sometimes afraid in giving explanations that one may do what a good Divine did with Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* which he edited with explanatory notes. He went round among his flock and said to one good woman, "Do you understand Mr. Bunyan's *Pilgrim*?" "Oh yes, Sir," was the answer, "very well, indeed. And I hope that one day I shall be able to understand your explanations." So, perhaps, you will say of me, that you understand the text very well, and you hope that one day you will be able to understand my explanations. Well, I really do not know how to make it more plain. My desire is to say very distinctly that we must receive the Lord Jesus Christ as a Divine Being—receive Him in all His offices—and receive Him to ourselves in all those offices.

The pith and marrow of receiving Christ we find in the next remark: *we must trust Him.* The true reception of Christ is explained in the text, "Even to them who *believe on His name."* To "receive" then, is to "believe," or, in other words, to credit, to rely upon, to trust. Now this is the simplest matter in all the world, and yet, by reason of its simplicity, it is the hardest possible act for human nature to perform. So hard, that although faith still remains the act of man, it is an act which he never performs till he receives faith as the *gift of God*. We do not naturally care for a plan of salvation so simple and devoid of merit, but there it is, and we cannot alter it, nor ought we desire to do so. As many as trust Christ, to them He gives power to become the sons of God. The whole act of faith lies in the simple matter of *believing* that Jesus is God's appointed Savior, and then throwing ourselves upon Him to save us. You know

what trust is in earthly matters. You rely upon a friend in cases of difficulty, and then you do not trouble yourself about the matter any more. A person offers to pay your debts, and you go home and consider yourself out of debt—you *trust* the person. Now Jesus says to you, *"I* have suffered for the sin of all Believers; God can now forgive sin, and yet be a just God, for He has punished *Me* instead of sinners who believe on Me; trust Me, rely upon Me, and your reliance will be at once evidence to you that I died for you, that I carried your sin, that God punished Me for you, and that He therefore can never punish you because in justice He cannot punish both Substitute and offender for one and the same sin." God can never punish Christ for your sin, and then lay the sin at your door; He will not send your Substitute to the wars for you, and then demand you to go for whom the Substitute has already gone. The act of trusting Jesus Christ is the act which brings a soul into a state of Grace, and is the mark and evidence of our being bought with the blood of the Lord Jesus. Do you trust Him, dear Hearer? Then, if so, you receive Him.

When the soul has thus trusted Christ, there comes another form of reception. The outer golden door of faith being first opened, *the inner pearly gate of affection is next thrown open.* They who trust Christ, *love* Christ—

"Sure I must love; or are my ears
Still deaf, nor will my passions move?
Lord! Melt this flinty heart to tears—
This heart shall yield to death or love."

I do not love Christ first, and then trust Him; I, in the dawn of spiritual life, trust Him to save me; I find He does save me, and I then love Him because He first loved me. I trust Him to deliver me out of the bondage of my daily sins, and then I find that I am stronger against those sins than I ever was before—that I can tread a corruption under foot when I trust Jesus, which I could not battle with before I trusted Him. I find He really does come to my rescue, and therefore I then say to him, "I love You, O my Helper and Friend." And from that time on Jesus Christ lives in my heart. We cannot help using expressions such as, "Christ living in us," "Jesus formed in us," and the like, when talking about these things, and to spiritual men they are very simple, but to the carnal mind they are very difficult. Let us in a word expound them. Just as when a man is attached to a certain friend, that friend is said to, "live in his heart." So Jesus lives in the hearts of His people, because they love Him; and, just as when a man has devoted himself to the pursuit of science, that science fills his soul, lives in his soul, makes an abode of it, makes a kingdom of it, where it will rule and reign; so, love to Jesus, faith in Him, and devotion to His cause, enter into the soul of the Believer and fill it, and thus that soul receives Him. The first door is the door of simple faith, a door which has been opened in many a sinner's heart by the loving hand of the Holy Spirit, a door which we pray, may be opened in yours tonight. Oh, how gently does the door of faith turn on its hinges! A babe taught of God may push it open.

You may not understand all the Doctrines of the Bible, but you can understand this—that if you trust in Jesus Christ, you will be a son or daughter of God. You cannot perform a complex act of an educated mind, sympathy with poetic imagery and enjoyment of metaphysical

refinements are quite beyond you; but if the Holy Spirit teaches you, you will see that the act of faith is not a complex act, but a very simple one, indeed. It is so simple, that children of three and four years of age have doubtless been capable of it; and there have been many persons but very little removed from absolute idiocy who have been able to believe; a Doctrine which needs to be reasoned out may require a high degree of mental development, but the simple act of trusting requires nothing of the kind. If you cannot read a letter in a book you may believe this, that God came down from Heaven in the Person of Jesus Christ, and suffered for sin Himself, that He might forgive sin and yet be just. I wonder that a man can hear it and not believe it! It is an amazing thing that such good news is not at once believed. Let me repeat it, and oh, may the blessed Spirit work faith in you who hear it! God was so just that He could not forgive sin without violating His Nature. He must award punishment to transgression; but to make Mercy consistent with the severest Justice the Lawgiver came Himself among men and gave His own shoulders to the scourge, and stretched out His own hands to feel the nails, to suffer, bleed, and die. And now if you trust God in the Person of Christ, and rely upon Him to put away your sin, and if you take Him from now on to be your King and Ruler, you shall be saved! God be thanked that we have so simple a Gospel to preach, and may the Lord bring many to receive it, that they may become His children!

II. We now turn to THE GREAT PRIVILEGE which is said in the text to be given to those who trust in the Son of God.

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He *power* to become the sons of God." The word "power" here may be translated "privilege," and one of the older commentators and translators renders it "honor," "to them gave He *the honor* to become the sons of God." Now, what is it to be a "son of God"? This theme demands a seraph to discourse upon it; yes, even an archangel might fail to describe what it is to be a son of God! Certainly it is a point of dignity beyond what any angel ever attained. "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten you?" But every man, woman, and child who believes in Jesus Christ is from that time on a child of God. You know what it is to be the son of a good man and true, and some of you would not willingly renounce your birthright. You claim from your father a child's privileges; you expect that, being a son, you shall inherit certain rights, and those rights you will duly receive. If I could stand here tonight and say I were a king's son, many would be wonderfully envious—but what do you say to this—I claim to be one of the sons of God? Does no man's heart aspire to this felicity? Are there no spirits which pine for this dignity? Oh, the utter baseness which does not rise to a desire after this glory! Do not suppose that when we say "son of God," we merely use a metaphor without meaning; no, every person who believes in Christ Jesus is entitled to all rights and privileges which go with a father-son relationship in any case, but which emphatically go with a Father-son relationship in the case of a son of God! What, then, are we entitled to, and what do we receive? A complete list I cannot attempt to make out for you, but as my mind suggests the gifts of adoption, they shall come before you.

If we are the sons of God, *we are dearly beloved of God.* Did you ever try to get that thought into your mind, *that God loves you?* I can understand that God *pities* me; that is a feeling which so vastly superior a Being might well feel to so inferior an existence; but that He *loves* me is scarcely conceivable, although it is most sure and certain. Who can drink this well dry? Who can bear home this fruitful sheaf of delights, this purple cluster of Eshcol? Sons of God are loved of their Father with a love surpassing thought.

They are, indeed, *intimately related* as well as dearly loved. There is a union between God and His children. There is the same Nature in the child as there is in the Father, for we become "partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." These are not words of mine, but of the Holy Spirit! One would not have dared to have uttered them if Inspiration had not made them ready to our hand. We are most near and dear to the blessed God who fills all in all.

Being sons and daughters *we are graciously treated.* "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them who fear Him." "He spares them as a man spares his own son who serves him." Goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Being children, again, *we are wisely educated.* Parents do not think they have done their duty unless they bring their children up to understand knowledge, and to be fitted to take their part with full grown adults. We are trained in the school of God. We receive chastisement, and are made to smart under His rod; we read in the illuminated Book of His Grace, and are "made meet," when fully educated, "to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." There is no school like that in which Love is the head master.

As children *we are admitted to a familiarity which servants cannot know.* A child may say and do to his father what no stranger could. God manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world. The secret of the Lord is with them who fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant. *We have access to God at all hours,* the Father's door is never locked against His much-loved children. Our cry He knows even as a father knows his child's cry from every other sound. *All our needs are provided for, and our Father's loving heart watches over all our wanderings and forgives all our offenses.*

Remember that a *father's relationship is one which cannot be suspended.* I know the old proverb says, "A father's a father till he gets a new wife," which implies that he is not afterwards, but that only means as to his actions, for *he must be* a father always; he cannot break off that relationship; he must cease to be before he can cease to be a father as long as his children live. When I have heard people say that you may be a child of God one day, and a child of the devil the next, I have felt inclined to buy them a dictionary so that they might know the meaning of the word "father." What a mistake! What a misuse of words do they commit! If I am my father's child I am so, and there is no power, human or Divine—I speak with reverence—that can disown me. Adoption

might cease to operate, but birth never. I *must be* the child of him that begat me; and so, if I am a child of God, begotten unto God by the incorruptible seed of His Word, there is no power, infernal or Divine, that can possibly rob me, as a child of God, of this privilege—a child I *am*, and a child I *must* be.

So then, we have honorable standing, safe-abiding, blessed inheritance, and perfected education, all belonging—to whom? Why, to as many as receive Christ, that is, to as many as trust Him. Poor trembling Soul, why should not *you* be in that number?

III. The third point was to be, THE GREAT WORK WHICH IS NECESSARILY INVOLVED IN THIS ACT OF RECEIVING CHRIST.

Every man who trusts the Lord Jesus has been born-again. The question was once argued in an assembly of Divines as to whether a person first had faith or regeneration, and it was suggested that it was a question which must forever be unanswerable. The process, if such it is, must be simultaneous—no sooner does the Divine Life come into the soul than it believes on Christ. You might as well ask whether in the human body there is first the circulation of the blood or the heaving of the lungs—both are essential ingredients in life, and must come at the same time. If I believe in Jesus Christ I need not ask any question as to whether I am regenerated, for no unregenerate person ever could believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and if regenerated I must believe in Jesus, for he who does not do so is clearly dead in sin. See, then, the folly of persons talking about being regenerated who have no faith. It cannot be; it is impossible. We can have no knowledge of such a thing as regeneration which is not accompanied with some degree of mental motion and consciousness. Regeneration is not a thing which takes place upon matter; it is a thing of spirit. The birth of the spirit must be the subject of consciousness, and though a man may not be able to say that at such and such a moment he was regenerated, yet the act of faith is a consciousness of regeneration. The moment I believe in Jesus Christ, my faith is an index to me of a work that has gone on within, and the secret work within, and the open act of faith without, God has joined together, and let no man put asunder. Those who believe not are unregenerate, though they may have been sprinkled by the best priest who ever had Episcopal hands laid on his head. If a man believes not he is unregenerate whether baptized or not, but if he believes, he is regenerate, though he may never have been baptized at all. Baptism may outwardly express regeneration after it has been received, and then the symbol becomes valuable; but without faith there can be no regeneration, even though Baptism is administered a thousand times!

Observe what kind of new birth it is which all Believers have received. It is one which comes “not of bloods,” (so the original has it), neither by the blood of circumcision, nor of the Passover, nor especially by the blood of descent.

Sin runs in the blood, if you will, but Divine Grace does not. We are not born Christians by the mere fact of our being the children of godly Christian people. Neither are we born Christians “of the will of man.” The best men in the world cannot create us anew; if they pray for us ever so much, the power of their will apart from the will of God cannot avail. We

are not born "of the will of the flesh," that is to say, our own free will does not cause it. If a man could will himself into a state of newness of heart, the fact of his being willing to be in such a state would, I suppose, be evidence of his being in that state already, but the human will is powerless in itself to produce regeneration. We must be born-again from above; the Holy Spirit must, by His Divine Energy, enter into us and make us new creatures, for such a heavenly birth is essential to Eternal Life.

Now, I think I hear some troubled conscience saying, "When you said just now that if I trusted in Christ I would be saved, I rejoiced, but when you say we must be born-again, that saying seems so mysterious that I am troubled." My dear Friend, there is no need to be troubled. If you trust in Christ, then you *are* born-again. I have already told you that there is no possibility of a soul ever truly relying upon the Savior unless there has been a previous new birth to produce his faith. If you are, tonight, able to put your whole trust in Jesus Christ as God's dear Son, and to take Him to be yours, though your new birth may be too mysterious a thing for you to know much about, for, "the wind blows where it likes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes," yet, your faith is a sufficient index that you are really a partaker of the new birth. I do not want to open the boiler of a steam engine for the sake of knowing what quantity of water there is in it—I am perfectly satisfied by looking at the gauge. Now faith is the gauge of the human soul—where there is faith there is new life—where there is no faith there is no life. There is no need to dissect a man, anatomize him, and cut him up in order to find out his spirit—you would destroy him in doing so; but when you see the man has action, motion, energy; when you put your hand upon his chest and feel the heaving of the lungs—you know that there is life. Now, if I may say so, faith is the heaving of the spiritual lungs; if you believe in Jesus Christ you are a living man; you have been born, "not of the will of man, but of God."

I should like to ask one question before I am done—*have all of you received Christ?* "Yes," or "No"? You good people up in the gallery there, I am not going to ask you where you generally worship, nor to what Church you belong, but have you received Christ? "Well, Sir, we were baptized." I do not care a farthing at this moment whether you were baptized or not! I leave that question till we have settled an earlier one. Have you received Christ? "Well, we take the sacrament." Never mind that; have you received Christ? Do you trust Him and Him only? To the point now—can your soul say—

"On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand"?

Have you received Jesus Christ, each one of you? And if you have not, why not? Is there anything so hard in receiving Him? I have sometimes thought I should like to tell the tale of the Cross for the first time to a number of savages who would just have sufficient culture to understand it—God was made flesh and dwelt among us, and rather than men should suffer God suffered Himself, and because Justice required punishment, "He bore the punishment instead" of sinners. Why, I think I see their eyes glistening, and I think their hearts must melt! But you

have heard the tale so often that it has become an old story to you! However, I would like to put the question to you again—have you received Jesus Christ? "Well, I have not had much experience," laments one, and another says, "I do not know much," and another cries, "We have had family prayer for 20 years," and another says, "My name is down for 20 guineas in several charitable institutions." Well, all that is very well, but I do not care about any of these matters tonight. All I want to know is, have you received Christ?

"Oh!" says one, "Of course! I was always brought up to it." But you cannot be "brought up to it." You must be brought *down* to it by being born-again; there must be a change in your *nature*. We do not preach the Gospel, as I have said before, to the depraved and debauched alone; we preach it to you good, excellent people—you whose honesty in trade, and whose moral character set you on high among your fellows, as upon a pinnacle. Even YOU must be born-again; Ladies and Gentlemen, *you* must be born-again, as well as the lowest of the low, and the poorest of the poor. We have the same Gospel to preach to Her Majesty the Queen, as we have to the sinners in a refuge, or the rogues in a reformatory. We know of no difference in this matter between any of you. A difference of morality there is, and we are thankful for it—but *you* must be born-again as much as the worst rebels in the world!

And you below here, have you received Christ? I know that many of you have, and that your hearts leap at the sound of His name. You can say—

"Jesus, the very thought of You,
With rapture fills my breast."

But there are some of you who have not received Christ—I mean not merely you who are occasional hearers, but my constant hearers. You have received me; you believe what I say; but you have not received Christ, and you do not believe what He tells you. It is one thing to believe in your minister, but quite another to believe in Jesus Christ. I pray you never stop short in receiving anything because we say it, or because we seem to prove it; you must get it burned into you as with a red-hot iron by God the Holy Spirit's Power, or else it will be of no service to you.

I stood a few hours ago at the bedside of one of our Brothers in Christ who seemed sorely sick and at the point of death. He could not speak aloud, but the soft and gentle words which he whispered in my ear were very precious. He had not his peace to make with God in his last hour; he had not then to seek Christ, but was full of perfect peace and rejoicing in unbroken calm. "He will not leave me, will He?" he asked—"He cannot deny Himself; I may sink, but I cannot sink lower than He will go, for underneath me are the everlasting arms." Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, the mere letter of Gospel Doctrine will not do to die on; you must have the spirit of it in your heart, or you cannot be comforted by it! Believe me, it is stern work to die. A Christian dies peacefully, but it is no child's play, even to him. Some of us, when we have been sick and racked with pain, know that we have had to search for our evidences with much care and anxiety. I have turned over many a moldy old deed that laid by in the chest of my evidences to try if I could—

"Read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,"

and glad enough have I been to light on some such word as this—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee,"

and to sing—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling."

But, my Hearers, what of some of you? The day is coming when the great assemblies of this house will seem but as nothing—when this immense gathering will be but as a drop in a bucket compared with that greater gathering! The trumpet, ringing through earth and Heaven, shall awaken the dead; The righteous and the wicked shall stand in judgment. We shall all be there; this company shall have no exception, there shall be no excuse for being absent on that tremendous day, and then there will be no question which will have so much weight as this one—HAVE YOU RECEIVED CHRIST?

I think I see the Reaper coming. He is hastening to gather the vintage of the world, for the grapes are fully ripe. The ungodly must be gathered first, and there they are, thrown in clusters into the winepress of the wrath of God; while the dread angels of avenging Justice tread the grapes until the blood flows out. Will you be there among the accursed clusters of Sodom and Gomorrah? Will you be there, you men and women of London, you dwellers in Newington and Walworth, who hear the Gospel constantly—will you be cast into the winepress of Jehovah's Wrath? And shall the streets be red with *your* blood? Or will you be yonder, where, with golden sickle, trusting no angel to do the work, Christ Himself shall reap His golden corn, ear after ear, and take it all home with shouts of delight to His Father's garner? Will you see Him, in that day, as the God that died for *you?* Will you see Him with exultation? Will you meet Him in the air, and so be forever with the Lord? If so, then receive Jesus, and He will receive you. Take Him into your hearts, and He will take you into Heaven. Take Him, His Cross, His people, His Gospel, His Doctrines; take Him, to "have and to hold" Him, "for better and for worse," and then not even "death" shall "part" you, but you shall be with Him "in the day of His appearing."

May the Lord seal His Word with His own blessing!

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FROST AND THAW
NO. 670

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 24, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He gives snow like wool: He scatters the frost like ashes. He casts out His hail like morsels; who can stand before His cold? He sends out His word, and melts them: He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow."
Psalm 147:16-18.

LOOKING out of our window one morning we saw the earth robed in a white mantle. In a few short hours the earth had been covered to a considerable depth with snow. We looked out again in a few hours and saw the fields as green as ever, and the plowed fields as bare as if no single flake had fallen. We do not often witness so heavy a descent of snow followed by a so rapid thaw.

These interesting changes were worked by God, not only with a purpose toward the outward world, but with some design toward the spiritual realm. God is always a Teacher. In every action that He performs He is instructing His own children, and opening up to them the road to inner mysteries. The mind aspiring after knowledge finds pleasure in every phenomenon of Nature; the naturalist is not abroad a single hour without hearing the Voice of Wisdom revealing natural things—but when a renewed mind is worshipping in Nature's temple, then the spirit finds a secret wrapped up in the innermost folds of God's works. Happy are those spirits who know how to get at the inward through the outward, and to find food for their Heaven-born spirits, as well as for their mental powers, in the doings of the Lord in the works of His hand.

I shall ask your attention, first, *to the operations of Nature spoken of in the text;* and, secondly, *to those operations of Divine Grace of which they are the most fitting symbols.*

I. Consider first, THE OPERATIONS OF NATURE. We shall not think a few minutes wasted if we call your attention to the hand of God in frost and thaw, even upon natural grounds.

1. Observe the *directness* of the Lord's work under our notice. I rejoice as I read these words, to find how present our God is in the world. It is not written, "the laws of Nature produce snow," but, "HE *gives snow*," as if every flake came directly from the palm of His hand, wherein it had

been hidden as in a treasury. We are not told that certain Providential regulations form moisture into frost; no, but as Moses took ashes and scattered them upon Egypt, so it is said of the Lord, "HE *scatters the frost like ashes."* It is not said that the Eternal has set the world going, and by the operation of its machinery ice is produced. Oh no, but every single granule of ice descending in the hail is from God; "HE *casts out His hail like morsels."* Even as the slinger distinctly sends the stone out of his sling, so the path of every hailstone is marked by the Divine Wisdom, and it derives its impetus from the Divine Power. The hail is called, you observe, *"His hail,"* and in the next sentence we read of *His* cold. These words make Nature strangely magnificent. When we can look upon every hailstone as God's hail, how precious the watery diamonds become! When we feel the cold nipping our limbs and penetrating through every garment, it somewhat consoles us to remember that it is *His* cold. When the thaw comes, see how the text speaks of it—*"He sends out His word."* He does not leave it to certain forces of Nature, but like a king, *"He sends out His word and melts them; He causes HIS wind to blow."* He has a special property in every wind; whether it comes from the north to freeze, or from the south to melt, it is *HIS* wind. Behold, my Brothers and Sisters, how in God's Temple everything speaks of His Glory. Learn to see the Lord in all scenes of the visible universe, for truly He works all things.

This thought of the directness of the Divine Operations in Nature must be carried into Providence. It will greatly comfort you if you can see God's hand in your losses and crosses. Surely you will not murmur against the direct agency of your God. This will put an extraordinary sweetness into daily mercies; this will make the comforts of life more comfortable still, because they are from a Father's hand; and if your table is scantily furnished it shall suffice for your contented heart, when you know that your Father spread it for you in His Wisdom and Love. This shall bless your bread and your water; this shall make the bare walls of an ill-furnished room as resplendent as a palace, and turn a hard bed into a couch of down—my Father does it all. We see His smile of Love even when others see nothing but the black hand of Death smiting our best beloved. We see a Father's hand when the pestilence lays our cattle dead upon the plain. We see God at work in Mercy when we ourselves are stretched upon the bed of languishing. It is always our Father's act and deed. Do not let us get beyond this; but rather let us enlarge our view of this Truth of God, and remember that this is true of the little as well as of the great. Let the lines of a true poet strike you—

"If pestilence stalks through the land, you say the Lord has done it—
Has He not done it when an aphid creeps upon the rosebud?

If an avalanche tumbles from its Alp, you tremble at the will of Providence—
Is not that will as much concerned when the dry leaves fall from the poplar?"

Let your hearts sing of everything—Jehovah-Shammah—The Lord Is There.

2. Next, I beg you to observe with thanksgiving the *ease* of God's working. These verses read as if the making of frost and snow were the simplest matter in the world. A man puts his hand into a wool-pack and throws out the wool; God gives snow as easily as that. "He gives snow like wool." A man takes up a handful of ashes and throws them into the air, and they fall around. "He scatters the frost like ashes." Frost and snow are marvels of Nature! Those who have observed the extraordinary beauty of the ice crystals have been enraptured, and yet, He casts forth His ice like morsels—just as easily as we cast crumbs of bread outside the window to the robins during wintry days. When the rivers are frozen hard, and the earth is held in iron chains, then the melting of the whole—how is that done? Not by kindling innumerable fires, nor by sending electric shocks from huge batteries through the interior of the earth—no; "He sends forth His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow." The whole matter is accomplished with a word and a breath. If you and I had any great thing to do, what puffing and panting, what straining and tugging there would be; and even the great engineers who perform marvels by machinery, make much noise and stir about it.

It is not so with the Almighty One. Our globe spins round in 24 hours, and yet it does not make as much noise as a humming top, and yonder ponderous worlds rolling in space track their way in silence. If I enter a factory I hear a deafening din, or if I stand near the village mill, turned by water dropping over a wheel. there is a never ceasing click-clack, or an undying hum; but God's great wheels revolve without noise or friction; all the Divine Works are simply, easily, and beautifully managed. This case is seen in Providence as well as in Nature. Your heavenly Father is as able to deliver you as He is to melt the snow, and He will deliver you in as simple a manner if you rest upon Him. He opens His hand and supplies the needs of every living thing as readily as He works in Nature. Mark the ease of God's working—He does but open His hand.

3. Notice in the next place the *variety* of the Divine operations in Nature. When the Lord is at work with frost as His tool, He creates snow, a wonderful production—every crystal being a marvel of art; but then He is not content with snow—from the same water He makes another form of beauty which we call frost, and yet a third lustrous sparkling substance, namely glittering ice, and all these by the one agency of *cold*. What a marvelous variety the educated eye can detect in the several

forms of frozen water! The same God who solidified the flood with cold soon melts it with warmth. But even in thaw there is no monotony of manner—at one time the joyous streams rush with such impetuosity from their imprisonment, that rivers are swollen and floods cover the plains. At another time, by slow degrees, in scanty driblets, the drops regain their freedom. The same variety is seen in every department of Nature. So in Providence the Lord has a thousand forms of frosty trials with which to try His people, and He has ten thousand beams of mercy with which to cheer and comfort them! He can afflict you with the snow trial, or with the frost trial, or with the ice trial if He wills; and another time He can, with His word, relax the bonds of adversity, and that in countless ways. Whereas men are tied to two or three methods in accomplishing *their* will, God is Infinite in understanding, and works as He wills by ways unknown to mortal minds.

4. I shall ask you, also, to consider the works of God in Nature in their *swiftness*. It was thought a wonderful thing in the days of Ahasuerus that letters were sent by post upon swift horses. In our country we thought we had arrived at the age of miracles when the axles of our wagons glowed with speed, and now that the telegraph is at work, we stretch out our hands into infinity! But what is our speed compared with that of God's operations? Well does the text say, "He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His word runs very swiftly." Forth went the word, "Open the treasures of snow," and the flakes descended in innumerable multitudes; and then it was said, "Let them be closed," and not another snowflake was seen. Then spoke the Master, "Let the south wind blow and the snow be melted," and it disappeared at the voice of His word. Believer, you cannot tell how soon God may come to your help. "He rode upon a cherub and did fly," says David, "Yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind." He will come from above to rescue His beloved; He will rend the heavens and come down; with such speed will He descend that He will not stay to draw the curtains of Heaven, but He will rend them in His haste, and make the mountains flow down at His feet—that He may deliver those who cry unto Him in the hour of trouble. That mighty God who can melt the ice so speedily can take to Himself the same eagle wings and hasten to your deliverance. Arise, O God! And let Your children be helped, and that right quickly!

5. One other thought. Consider the *goodness* of God in all the operations of Nature and Providence. Think of that goodness negatively. "Who can stand before His cold?" You cannot help thinking of the poor in a hard winter—only a hard heart can forget them when you see the snow lying deep. But suppose that snow continued to fall! What is there to

hinder it? The same God who sends us snow for one day could do the like for 50 days if He pleased. Why not? And when the frost pinches us so severely, why should it not be continued month after month? We can only thank the goodness which does not send "His cold" to such an extent that our spirits expire. Travelers towards the North Pole tremble as they think of this question, "Who can stand before His cold?" For the agency of cold has a degree of Omnipotence in it when God is pleased to let it loose. Let us thank God for the restraining mercy by which He holds the cold in check.

Not only negatively, but positively there is mercy in the snow. Is not that a suggestive metaphor? "He gives snow like wool." The snow is said to warm the earth; it protects those little plants which have just begun to peep above ground and might otherwise be frostbitten; as with a garment of down the snow protects them from the extreme severity of cold. Watts sings, in his version of the 147th Psalm—

"His flakes of snow like wool He sends,
And thus the springing corn defends."

It was an idea of the ancients that snow warmed the heart of the soil, gave it fertility, and therefore they praised God for it. Certainly there is much mercy in the frost, for pestilence might run a far longer race if it were not that the frost cries to it, "Up to here shall you come, but no farther." Noxious insects would multiply until they devoured the precious fruits of the earth if sharp nights did not destroy millions of them so that these pests are swept from off the earth. Though man may think himself a loser by the cold, he is a great ultimate gainer by the decree of Providence which ordains winter!

The quaint saying of one of the old writers that, "snow is wool, and frost is fire, and ice is bread, and rain is drink," is true, though it sounds like a paradox. There is no doubt that frost, in breaking up the soil, promotes fruitfulness, and so the ice becomes bread. Thus those agencies which for the moment deprive our workers of their means of sustenance, are the means by which God supplies every living thing. Mark, then, God's goodness as clearly in the snow and frost as in the thaw which clears the winter's work away.

Christian, remember the goodness of God in the frost of adversity, which you felt this morning. Rest assured that when God is pleased to send out the biting winds of affliction, He is in them, and He is always *Love*—as much Love in sorrow as when He breathes upon you the soft south wind of joy. See the loving kindness of God in every work of His hand; praise Him, He makes summer and winter; let your song go round the year! Praise Him—He gives day and sends night—thank Him at all

hours! Cast not away your confidence, it has great recompense of reward. As David wove the snow, and rain, and stormy wind into a song, even so combine your trials, your tribulations, your difficulties, and adversities into a sweet Psalm of praise, and say perpetually—

"Let us, with a gladsome mind,
Praise the Lord, for He is kind."

Thus much upon the operations of Nature; it is a very tempting theme, but other fields invite the reaper.

II. I would address you very earnestly and solemnly upon THOSE OPERATIONS OF GRACE OF WHICH FROST AND THAW ARE THE OUTWARD SYMBOLS.

There is a period with God's own people when He comes to deal with them by the *frost of the Law.* The Law is to the soul as the cutting north wind. Faith can see love in it, but the carnal eye of sense cannot. It is a cold, terrible, comfortless blast. To be exposed to the full force of the Law of God would be to be frostbitten with everlasting destruction; even to feel it for a season would congeal the marrow of one's bones, and make one's whole being stiff with fear. "Who can stand before His cold?" When the Law comes forth thundering from its treasuries, who can stand before it? The effect of law-work upon the soul is to bind up the rivers of human delight. No man can rejoice when the terrors of conscience are upon him; when the Law of God is sweeping through the soul, music and dancing lose their joy—the bowl forgets its power to cheer—and the enchantments of earth are broken. The rivers of pleasure freeze to icy despondency; the buds of hope are suddenly nipped, and the soul finds no comfort. It was satisfied once to grow rich, but rust and canker are now upon all gold and silver. Every promising hope is frost-bitten, and the spirit is winter-bound in despair. This cold makes the sinner feel how ragged his garments are; he could strut about when it was summer weather and think his rags right royal robes—but now the cold frost finds out every tear in his garments, and in the hands of the terrible Law he shivers like the leaves upon the aspen. The north wind of judgment searches the man through and through; he did not know what was in him, but now he sees his inward parts to be filled with corruption and rottenness. These are some of the terrors of the wintry breath of the Law.

All the while, however, this frost of Law and terrors only tends to harden. Nothing splits the rock or makes the cliff tumble like frost when succeeded by thaw, but frost alone makes the earth like a mass of iron breaking the plowshare which would seek to pierce it. A sinner under the influence of the Law of God, apart from the Gospel, is hardened by despair, and cries, "There is no hope, and therefore I will go after my

lusts; whereas there is no Heaven for me after this life, I will make a Heaven out of this earth; and since Hell awaits me, I will at least enjoy such sweets as sin may afford me here." This is not the fault of the Law—the blame lies with the corrupt heart which is hardened by it. Nevertheless, such is its effect.

When the Lord has worked by the frost of the Law, He sends the thaw of the Gospel. When the south wind blows from the land of promise bringing precious remembrances of God's fatherly pity and tender loving kindness, then straightway the heart begins to soften, and a sense of blood-bought pardon speedily dissolves it. The eyes fill with tears, the heart melts in tenderness, rivers of pleasure flow freely, and buds of hope open in the cheerful air! A heavenly spring whispers to the flowers that were sleeping in the cold earth—they hear its voice, and lift up their heads, for "the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." God sends His Word, saying, "Your warfare is accomplished, and your sin is pardoned." And when that blessedly cheering Word comes with power to the soul, and the sweet breath of the Holy Spirit acts like the warm south wind upon the heart, then the waters flow and the mind is filled with holy joy, and light, and liberty, for God is there!—

"The legal wintry state is gone,
The frosts are fled, the spring comes on,
The sacred turtledove we hear
Proclaims the new, the joyful year."

Having shown you that there is a parallel between frost and thaw in Nature, and Law and Gospel in Grace, I would utter the same thoughts concerning Grace which I gave you concerning Nature.

1. We began with the *directness of God's works in Nature.* Now, beloved Friends, mark the *directness of God's works in Grace.* When the heart is truly affected by the Law of God; when sin is made to appear exceedingly sinful; when carnal hopes are frozen to death by the Law; when the soul is made to feel its barrenness and utter death and ruin—this is the finger of God. Do not speak of it as the finger of the *minister*. It was well that he preached earnestly—God has used him as an instrument, but God works all. When the thaw of Divine Grace comes, I pray you will discern the distinct hand of God in every beam of comfort which gladdens the troubled conscience, for it is the Lord, alone, who binds up the broken in heart, and heals all their wounds! We are far too apt to stop in instrumentalities. Folly makes men look to sacraments for heart-breaking or heart-healing, but sacraments all say, "It is not in us." Some of you look to the preaching of the Word, and look no higher, but

all true preachers will tell you, "It is not in us." Eloquence and earnestness at their highest pitch can neither break nor heal a heart. This is *God's* work, yes, and not God's *secondary* work in the sense in which the philosopher admits that God is in the laws of Nature, but God's *personal* and *immediate* work. He puts forth His own hand when the conscience is humbled, and it is by His own right hand that the conscience is eased and cleansed. I desire that this thought may abide upon your minds, for you will not praise God otherwise, nor will you be sound in doctrine.

All departures from sound Doctrine on the point of conversion arise from forgetfulness that it is a *Divine Work* from first to last—that the faintest *desire* after Christ is as much the Work of God as the gift of His dear Son—and that our whole spiritual history through, from the Alpha to the Omega, the Holy Spirit works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. As you have evidently seen the finger of God in casting forth His ice, and in sending thaw, so I pray you recognize the handiwork of God in giving you a sense of sin and in bringing you to the Savior's feet. Join together in heartily praising the wonder-working God who does all things according to the counsel of His will—

"Our seeking Your face
Was all of Your Grace!
Your mercy demands, and shall have all the praise:
No sinner can be
Beforehand with Thee,
Your Grace is preventing, almighty and free."

2. The second thought upon Nature was the *ease* with which the Lord worked. There was no effort or disturbance. Transfer that to the work of Divine Grace. How easy it is for God to send law-work into the soul! You stubborn Preacher, you cannot touch him! And even Providence has failed to awaken him, he is dead—altogether dead in trespasses and sins, but if the glorious Lord will graciously send forth the wind of His Spirit, that will melt him. The swearing reprobate, whose mouth is blackened with profanity—if the Lord does but look upon him, and make bare His arm of Irresistible Grace—he shall yet praise God and bless His name! And he will live to His honor. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel. Persecuting *Saul* became loving *Paul*, and why should not that person be saved of whose case you almost despair? Your husband may have many points which make his case difficult, but no case is desperate with God; your son may have offended both against Heaven and against you, but God can save the most hardened. The sharpest frost of obstinate sin must yield to the thaw of Divine Grace—even huge icebergs of crime must melt in the Gulf stream of Infinite Love.

Poor Sinner, I cannot leave this point without a word to you. Perhaps the Master has sent the frost to you, and you think it will never end. Let me encourage you to hope, and yet more, to *pray* for gracious visitations. Miss Steele's verses will just suit your mournful, yet hopeful state—

"Stern winter throws his icy chains,
Encircling Nature round—
How bleak, how comfortless the plains,
Late with bright verdure crowned!
The sun withdraws his vital beams,
And light and warmth depart.
And, drooping lifeless, Nature seems
An emblem of my heart—
My heart, where mental winter reigns
In night's dark mantle clad,
Confined in cold, inactive chains!
How desolate and sad!
Return, O blissful sun, and bring
Your soul-reviving ray—
This mental winter shall be spring,
This darkness cheerful day."

It is easy for God to deliver you. He says, "I have blotted out like a thick cloud your transgressions." I stood the other evening looking up at a black cloud which was covering all the heavens, and I thought it would surely rain. I entered the house, and when I came out again the sky was all blue—the wind had driven the clouds away. So may it be with your soul; it is an easy thing for the Lord to put away sin from repenting sinners. All obstacles which hindered our pardon were removed by Jesus when He died upon the Cross, and if you believe in Him, you will find that He has cast your sins into the depths of the sea! If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.

3. The next thought concerning the Lord's work in nature was the *variety* of it. Frost produces a sort of trinity in unity—snow, frost, ice—and when the thaw comes its ways are many. So is it with the work of God in the heart. Conviction comes not alike to all. Some convictions fall as the snow from Heaven—you never hear the flakes descend. They alight so gently, one upon the other. There are softly coming convictions—they are felt, but we can scarcely tell when we began to feel them. A true work of repentance may be of the gentlest kind. On the other hand, the Lord casts forth His ice like morsels—the hailstones rattle against the window, and you think they will surely force their way into the room! And to many persons, convictions come beating down till they remind you of hailstones. There is variety. It is as true a frost which produces the noiseless snow as that which brings forth the terrible hail.

Why should you want hailstones of terror? Be thankful that God has visited you, but do not dictate to Him the way of His working.

With regard to the Gospel thaw. If you may but be pardoned by Jesus, do not stipulate as to the manner of His Grace. Thaw is universal and gradual, but its commencement is not always discernible. The chains of winter are unloosed by degrees—the surface ice and snow melt—and by-and-by the warmth permeates the entire mass till every rock of ice gives way. But while thaw is universal and visible in its *effects,* you cannot see the mighty power which is doing all this. Even so you must not expect to discern the Spirit of God. You will find Him gradually operating upon the entire man, enlightening the understanding, freeing the will, delivering the heart from fear, inspiring hope, waking up the whole spirit, gradually and universally working upon the mind, and producing the manifest effects of comfort, and hope, and peace. But you can no more *see* the Spirit of God than you can see the south wind! The effect of His power is to be *felt*, and when you feel it, do not marvel if it is somewhat different from what others have experienced. After all, there is a singular likeness in snow and frost and ice, and so there is a remarkable sameness in the experience of all God's children; but there is still a great variety in the inward operations of Divine Grace.

4. We must next notice the *rapidity* of God's works. "His word runs very swiftly." It did not take many days to get rid of the last snow. A contractor would take many a day to cart it away, but God sends forth His word, and the snow and ice disappear at once. So is it with the soul—the Lord often works rapidly when He cheers the heart; you may have been a long time under the operation of His frosty Law, but there is no reason why you should be another hour under it—if the Spirit enables you to trust in the finished work of Christ, you may go out of this house rejoicing that every sin is forgiven. Poor Soul, do not think that the way from the horrible pit is to climb, step by step, to the top! Oh, no! Jesus can set your feet upon a rock before the clock shall have gone round the dial; He can, in an instant, bring you from death to life, from condemnation to justification. "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise," was spoken to a dying thief, black and defiled with sin. Only believe in the Atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!

5. Our last thought upon the operation of God was *His goodness* in it all. What a blessing that God did not send us more law-work than He did. "Who can stand before His cold?" Oh, Beloved, when God has taken away from man natural comfort, and made him feel Divine Wrath in his soul, it is an awful thing! Speak of a haunted man—no man need be haunted with a worse ghost than the remembrance of his old sins. The

childish tale of the sailor with the old man of the mountain on his back, who pressed him more and more heavily, is more than realized in the history of the troubled conscience. If one sin does but leap on a man's back, it will sink the sinner through every standing place that he can possibly mount upon; he will go down, down, under its weight, till he sinks to the lowest depths of Hell. There is no place where sin can be borne till you get upon the Rock of Ages—and even there the joy is not that you bear it—but that Jesus has borne it all *for* you! The spirit would utterly fail before the Law if it had full sway. Thank God, "He stays His rough wind in the day of His east wind." At the same time, how thankful we may be that we ever felt the law frost in our soul. The folly of self-righteousness is killed by the winter of conviction; we would have been a thousand times more proud, and foolish, and worldly than we are, if it had not been for the sharp frost with which the Lord nipped the growths of the flesh.

But how shall we thank Him sufficiently for the thaw of His loving kindness? How great the change which His mercy made in us as soon as its beams had reached our soul. Hardness vanished, cold departed, warmth and love abounded, and the life-floods leaped in their channels. The Lord visited us, and we rose from our grave of despair even as the seeds arise from the earth; as the bulb of the crocus holds up its golden cup to be filled with sunshine, so did our new-born faith open itself to the Glory of the Lord! As the primrose peeps up from the sod to gaze upon the sun, so did our hope look forth for the promise, and delight itself in the Lord. Thank God that spring tide has with many of us matured into summer, and winter has gone, never to return. We praise the Lord for this every day of our lives, and we will praise Him when time shall be no more in that sunny land—

"Where everlasting spring abides,
And never withering flowers.
A thread-like stream alone divides
That heavenly land from ours."

Believe in the Lord, you who shiver in the frost of the Law, and the Law of Love shall soon bring you warm days of joy and peace. So be it. Amen.

Portion of Scripture read before sermon—Psalm 147.

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THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS
NO. 671

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 21, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit upon the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to them on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and you gave Me food; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; I was naked, and you clothed Me; was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me." Matthew 25:31-36.

IT is exceedingly beneficial to our souls to mount above this present evil world to something nobler and better. The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches are apt to choke everything good within us, and we grow fretful, desponding, perhaps proud, carnal. It is well for us to cut down these thorns and briars, for heavenly seed sown among them is not likely to yield a harvest, and I do not know a better sickle with which to cut them down than thoughts of the Kingdom to come. In the valleys in Switzerland many of the inhabitants are deformed and dwarfish, and the whole of them wear a sickly appearance, for the atmosphere is noxious, and is close and stagnant. You traverse those valleys as rapidly as you can, and are glad to escape from them. Up yonder on the mountain you will find a hardy race who breathe the clear fresh air as it blows from the virgin snows of the Alpine summits. It would be well for their frames if the dwellers in the valley could frequently leave their abodes among the marshes and the fever mists, and get themselves up into the clear atmosphere above. It is to such an exploit of climbing that I invite you this morning. May the Spirit of God bear us as upon eagles' wings, that we may leave the mists of fear and the fevers of anxiety, and all the ills which gather in this valley of earth, and get ourselves up to the mountains of future joy and blessedness where it is to be our delight to dwell world without end! Oh may God disentangle us now for a little while, cut the cords that keep us here below, and permit us to mount! We sit, some of us, like chained eagles fastened to the rock, only that, unlike the eagle, we begin to *love* our chain, and would, perhaps, if it came really to the test, loath to have it snapped. May God now grant us Divine Grace if we cannot at once escape from the chain of mortal life as to our bodies, yet to do so as to our spirits; and leaving the body like a servant at the foot of the hill, may our soul, like Abraham, go to the top of the mountain, and there may we have communion with the Most High.

While expounding my text, I shall ask your attention this morning, first, *to the circumstances which surround the rewarding of the righteous;* secondly, *to their portion*; and thirdly, *to the persons themselves.*

I. There is MUCH OF TEACHING IN THE SURROUNDING CIRCUMSTANCES.

We read, *"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory."* It appears, then, that we must not expect to receive our reward till by-and-by. Like the hireling we must fulfill our day, and then at evening we shall have our penny. Too many Christians look for a *present* reward for their labors, and if they meet with success, they begin doting upon it as though they had received their recompense. Like the disciples who returned saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us," they rejoice too exclusively in present prosperity; whereas the Master bade them not to look upon miraculous success as being their reward, since that might not always be the case. "Nevertheless," said He, "rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." Success in the ministry is not the Christian minister's true reward—it is an earnest—but the wages still are in the future. You must not look upon the praise from your fellow men as being the reward of excellence, for often you will meet with the reverse, for you will find your best actions misconstrued, and your motives ill interpreted. If you are looking for your reward *here*, I may warn you of the Apostle's words, "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable." Because other men get their reward; even the Pharisee gets his—"Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward," but we have none here. To be despised and rejected of men is the Christian's lot. Among his fellow Christians he will not always stand in good repute. It is not unmitigated kindness nor unmingled love that we receive even from the saints. I tell you, if you look for your reward from Christ's bride, herself, you will miss it; if you expect to receive your crown from the hand even of your Brothers in the ministry who know your labors, and who ought to sympathize with your trials, you will be mistaken. "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory," *then* is your time of recompense—not today, nor tomorrow, nor at any time in this world. Reckon nothing which you acquire, no honor which you gain, to be the reward of your service to your Master; that is reserved for the time "when the Son of Man shall come in His glory."

Observe with delight the august Person by whose hand the reward is given. It is written, "When *the King* shall come." Brothers and Sisters, we love the King's courtiers; we delight to be numbered with them ourselves. It is no mean thing to do service to Him whose head—"Though once was crowned with thorns, is crowned with glory now." But it is a delightful thought that the service of rewarding us will not be left to the courtiers. The angels will be there, and the Brethren of the King will be there; but Heaven was not prepared by them, nor can it be given by them. Their hands shall not yield us a coronation; we shall join their songs, but their songs would be no reward for us. We shall bow with them and they with us, but it will not be possible for them to give us the recompense of the reward—that starry crown is all too weighty for an angel's hand to bring, and the benediction all too sweet to be pronounced, even by seraphic lips. The King Himself must say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

What do you say to this, my dear Brothers and Sisters? You have felt a temptation to look to God's servants, to the approval of the *minister*, to the kindly look of parents, to the word of commendation from your fellow worker; all these you value, and I do not blame you; but these may fail you, and therefore never consider them as being *the* reward. You must wait till the time when the King comes, and then it will neither be your Brethren, your pastors, your parents, nor your helpers, but the King Himself who shall say to you, "Come, you blessed." How this sweetens Heaven! It will be Christ's own gift. How this makes the benediction doubly blessed! It shall come from His lips, which drop like myrrh and flow with honey. Beloved, it is Christ who became a curse for us, who shall give the blessing to us. Roll this as a sweet morsel under your tongues.

The Character in which our Lord Jesus shall appear is significant. Jesus will then be revealed as truly *"the King."* "When the *King* shall come." It was to Him as King that the service was rendered, and it is from Him as King that the reward must therefore come; and so, upon the very threshold a question of self-examination arises—"The King will not reward the servants of another prince—am I, therefore, His servant? Is it my joy to wait at the threshold of His gates, and sit like Mordecai at the courts of Ahasuerus—at the entrance of His door? Say, Soul, do you serve *the* King?" I mean not the kings and queens of earth; let them have loyal servants for their subjects; but saints are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings—are you so? If you are not so, when the King comes in His glory, there can be no reward for you. I long in my own heart to recognize Christ's kingly office more than I have ever done. It has been my delight to preach to you Christ dying on the Cross, and "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross." But I need, for myself, to realize Him on His Throne, reigning in my heart, having a right to do as He wills with me, that I may get to the condition of Abraham, who, when God spoke, though it was to tell him to offer up his own Isaac, never asked a question, but simply said, "Here am I." Beloved, seek to know and feel the controlling power of the King, or else when He comes, since you have not known Him as King, He cannot know you as servant; and it is only to the servant that the King can give the reward which is spoken of in the text—"When the King shall come."

Now pass on. "When the King shall come in His *glory*." The fullness of that is impossible to conceive—

"Imagination's utmost stretch,
In wonder dies away."

But this we know—and it is the sweetest thing we can know—that if we have been partakers with Jesus in His shame, we also shall be sharers with Him in the luster which shall surround Him. Are you, Beloved, one with Christ Jesus? Are you of His flesh and of His bones? Does a vital union knit you to Him? Then you are today with Him in His shame; you have taken up His Cross and gone with Him outside the camp bearing His reproach; you shall doubtless be with Him when the Cross is exchanged for the crown. But judge yourself this morning; if you are not with Him in the regeneration, neither shall you be with Him when He shall come in His glory. If you start back from the black side of

communion, you shall not understand its bright, its happy period when the King shall come in His glory, and all His holy angels with Him. What? Are angels with Him? And yet He took not up angels, He took up the seed of Abraham. Are the holy angels with Him? Come, my Soul, then you cannot be far from Him. If His friends and His neighbors are called together to see His glory, what do you think if you are married to Him? Shall you be distant? Though it is a day of judgment, yet you cannot be far from that heart which, having admitted angels into intimacy, has admitted you into union. Has He not said to you, O my Soul, "I have betrothed you unto Me in faithfulness, and in judgment, and in righteousness"? Have not His own lips said it, "I am married to you, and My delight is in you"? Then if the angels, who are but the friends and the neighbors, shall be with Him, it is abundantly certain that His own beloved Hephzibah, in whom is all His delight, shall be near to Him and shall be a partaker of His splendor.

It is when He comes in His glory, and when His communion with angels shall be distinctly recognized—it is then that His unity with His Church shall become apparent. *"Then will He sit upon the throne of His glory."* Here is a repetition of the same reason why it should be your time and my time to receive the reward from Christ if we are found among His faithful servants. When *He* sits upon His throne it were not fit that His own beloved ones should be in the mire. When He was in the place of shame they were with Him, and now that He is on the Throne of gold, they must be with Him, too. There were no oneness—union with Christ were a mere matter of talk—if it were not certain that when He is on the Throne they shall be upon the Throne, too.

But I want you to notice one particular circumstance with regard to the time of the reward. It is *when He shall have divided the sheep from the goats.* My reward, if I am a child of God, cannot come to me while I am in union with the wicked. Even on earth you will have the most enjoyment of Christ when you are most separated from this world; rest assured, although the separated path does not seem an easy one, and it will certainly entail upon you persecution and the loss of many friends, yet it is the happiest walking in the world. You conforming Christians who can enter into the world's mirth to a certain degree, you cannot, you never can know as you now are, the inward joys of those who live in lonely but lovely fellowship with Jesus. The nearer you get to the world, the further you must be from Christ, and I believe the more thoroughly a bill of divorce is given by your spirit to every earthly object upon which your soul can set itself, the more close will be your communion with your Lord. "Forget also your own country and your father's house; so shall the King greatly desire your beauty, for He is your Lord, and worship you Him." It is significant that not until the King has separated the sheep from the goats does He say, "Come, you blessed," and though the righteous will have enjoyed a happiness as disembodied spirits, yet as risen from the grave in their bodies, their happiness is not fully accomplished till the great Shepherd shall have appeared to separate them from all association with the nations that forget God, once and for all, by a great gulf which cannot be passed. Now then, Beloved, these circumstances all put together come to this, that the reward of following

Christ is not today, is not among the sons of men, is not from men, is not even from the excellent of the earth, is not even bestowed by Jesus while we are here, but the glorious crown of life which the Lord's Divine Grace shall give to His people is reserved for the Second Advent, "when the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him." Wait with patience, wait with joyful expectation, for He shall come, and blessed be the day of His appearing.

II. We have now to turn to the second point—THE PORTION ITSELF. Every word is suggestive. I shall not attempt to exhaust, but merely to glance at all of them. The reward of the righteous is set forth by the loving benediction pronounced to them by the Master, but *their very position* gives some foreshadowing of it. He put the sheep on His right hand. Heaven is a position of the most elevated dignity authoritatively conferred, and of Divine Complacency manifestly enjoyed. God's saints are always at His right hand according to the judgment of faith, but hereafter it shall be more clearly manifested. God is pleased to be close to His people, and to place them near to Himself in a place of protection. Sometimes it seems as if they were at the left hand; they certainly have, some of them, less comfort than the worldlings. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree; their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart could wish," whereas His people are often made to drink waters of less than a full cup, and their meat and their drink are bitter with wormwood and gall. The world is upside down now; the Gospel has begun to turn it the right way uppermost, but when the Day of Grace is over, and the Day of Glory comes, then shall it be righted, indeed; then those who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins shall be clothed in glittering apparel, being transfigured like the Savior upon Tabor. Then those of whom the world was not worthy shall come to a world that shall be worthy of them; then those who were hurried to the stake and to the flames shall triumph with chariots of fire and horses of fire, and swell the splendor of the Master's pompous appearing. Yes, Beloved, you shall eternally be the object of Divine Complacency, not in secret and unknown communion, but your state and glory shall be revealed before the sons of men. Your persecutors shall gnash their teeth when they see you occupying places of honor at His right hand, and themselves, though greater far than you on earth, condemned to take the lowest room. How shall Dives bite his fire-tormented tongue in vain as he sees Lazarus, the beggar on the dunghill, made to sit at the right hand of the Eternal and Immortal King! Heaven is a place of dignity. "There we shall be as the angels," said one, but I know we shall be even superior to them. Is it not written of Him who in all things is our Representative, "You have put all things under His feet"? Even the very seraphs, themselves, so richly blessed, what are they but "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation"?

But now turning to the welcome uttered by the Judge, the first word is *"Come."* It is the Gospel symbol. The Law said "Go," the Gospel says, "Come." The Spirit said it in invitation; the Bride said it in intercession; "Let him who hears" say it by constantly, laboriously endeavoring to spread abroad the good news. Since Jesus said, "Come," we learn that

the very essence of Heaven is communion. "Come!" You came near enough to say, "Lord, we believe, help You our unbelief!" You looked to Him on the Cross, and were lightened. You had fellowship with Him in bearing His Cross. You filled up that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ for His body's sake, which is the Church. Still come! Always come! Forever come! Come up from your graves, you risen ones! Come up from among the ungodly, you consecrated ones! Come up from where you cast yourselves down in your humiliation before the Great White Throne! Come up to wear My crown, and sit with Me upon My Throne! Oh, that word has Heaven lurking within it. It shall be to you your joy forever to hear the Savior say to you, "Come." I declare before you that my soul has sometimes been so full of joy that I could hold no more when my beloved Lord has said, "Come," to my soul; for He has taken me into His banqueting house and His banner of love has waved over my head, and He has taken me away from the world and its cares, and its fears, and its trials and its joys, up to "the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon," where He manifested Himself to me. When this, "Come," shall come into your ear from the Master's lips, there shall not be the flesh to drag you back, there shall be no sluggishness of spirit, no heaviness of heart—you shall come eternally, then—you shall not mount to descend again, but mount on and on in blessed joy forever and forever! The first word indicates that Heaven is a state of communion—"Come."

Then it is, *"Come, you blessed,"* which is a clear declaration that this is a state of happiness. They cannot be more blessed than they are. They have their hearts' desire, and their hearts have been enlarged, and their desires have been expanded by entering into the Infinite, and though they are rid of the cramping influences of corruption and of time, yet even when their desire shall know no bounds, they shall have all the happiness that the utmost stretch of their souls can by any possibility conceive. This much, and this is all we know—they are supremely blessed. Their blessedness you perceive does not come from any secondary joy, but from the great primary Source of all good. "Come, you blessed of My Father." They drink the unadulterated wine at the winepress itself, where it joyously leaps from the bursting clusters; they pluck celestial fruits from the unwithering boughs of the immortal tree; they shall sit at the well-head and drink the waters as they spring forth with unrivalled freshness from the depths of the heart of Deity; they shall not be basking in the beams of the sun, but they shall be, like Uriel, the angel in the sun; they shall dwell in God, and so their souls shall be satisfied with favor, and full and more than full with His Presence and benediction.

Notice, once again, that according to the words used it is a state where they shall recognize their right to be there; a state therefore of perfect freedom, and ease and fearlessness. It is—*"inherit the kingdom."* A man does not fear to lose that which he wins by descent from his parents. If Heaven had been the subject of earning, we might have feared that our merits had not really deserved it, and therefore suspect that one day a Writ of Error would be issued and that we should be ejected; but we do know whose children we are; we know whose love it is that makes glad

our spirits, and when we "inherit" the kingdom we shall enter it not as strangers or as foreigners, but as children coming to their birthright. Looking over all its streets of gold and surveying all its walls of pearl, we shall feel that we are at home in our own house, and have an actual right, not through merit but through Divine Grace, to everything that is there. It will be a state of heavenly bliss; the Christian shall feel that law and justice are on his side, and that those stern attributes have brought him there as well as mercy and loving kindness. But the word "inherit" here imports full possession and enjoyment. They have inherited in a certain sense before, but now as an heir when he has arrived at fall maturity, begins to spend his own money, and to farm his own acres, so do they enter into their heritage. We are not full grown as yet, and therefore are not admitted to full possession. But wait awhile; those gray hairs betoken, my Brethren, that you are getting ripe. These, these, these my still youthful locks show me alas that I may have to tarry for a little longer, and yet I know not, the Lord may soon permit me to sleep with my fathers. But later or earlier, be it as He wills, we shall one day come into possession of the goodly land. Now if it is sweet to be an heir while you are in youth, what is it to be an heir when arrived at perfect manhood? Was it not delightful to sing that hymn just now, and to behold the land of pure delight whose everlasting spring and never-withering flowers are just across the narrow stream of death? Oh you sweet fields! You saints immortal who lie down there! When shall we be with you and be satisfied? If the mere thinking of Heaven ravishes the soul, what must it be to be there, to plunge deep into the stream of blessedness, to dive and find no bottom, to swim and find no shore? To sip of the wine of Heaven as we sometimes do makes our hearts so glad that we know not how to express our joy; but what will it be to drink deep and drink again, and sit forever at the table and know that the feast will never be over and the cups will never be empty, and that there will be no worse wine to be brought out at the last, but if possible better still, and better still in infinite progression?

The word *"kingdom,"* which stands next, indicates the richness of the heritage of saints. It is no petty estate, no alms rooms, no happy corner in obscurity. I heard a good man say he should be content to win a corner behind the door. I shall not be. The Lord says we shall inherit a *kingdom*. We would not be satisfied to inherit less, because less than that would not suit our character. "He has made us kings and priests unto God," and we must reign forever and ever, or be as wretched as deposed monarchs. A king without a kingdom were an unhappy man. If I were a poor servant, an alms room would be a joy, for it would consort with my condition and degree; but if I am made, by Grace, a king, I must have a kingdom, or I shall not have attained to a position equal to my nature. He who makes us kings will give us a kingdom to fit the nature which He has bestowed upon us. Beloved, strive after, more and more, that which the Spirit of God will give you, a kingly heart; do not be among those who are satisfied and content with the miserable nature of ordinary humanity. A child's glass bead is all the world is to a truly royal spirit; these glittering diadems are only nursery toys to God's kings; the true jewels are up there; the true treasury of wealth looks down upon the

stars; do not stint your soul; be not straitened! Get a kingly heart—ask the King of kings to give it to you, and beg of Him a royal spirit. Act royally on earth towards your Lord, and for His sake towards all men. Go about the world not as mean men in spirit and act, but as kings and princes of a race superior to the dirt scrapers who are on their knees, crawling in the mud after yellow earth. Then, when your soul is royal, remember with joy that your future inheritance shall be all that your kingly soul pants after in its most royal moments. It will be a state of unutterable richness and wealth of soul.

According to the word *"prepared,"* we may conceive it to be a condition of surpassing excellence. It is a *kingdom prepared,* and it has been so long a time prepared, and He who prepares it is so wondrously rich in resources, that we cannot possibly conceive how excellent it must be. If I might so speak, God's common gifts, which He throws away as though they were nothing, are priceless; but what will be these gifts upon which the Infinite mind of God has been set for ages of ages in order that they may reach the highest degree of excellence? Long before Christmas chimes were ringing, mother was so glad to think her boy was coming home, after the first quarter he had been out at school, and straightway she began preparing and planning all sorts of joys for him. Well might the holidays be happy when mother had been contriving to make them so. Now in an infinitely nobler manner the great God has prepared a kingdom for His people; He has thought, "that will please them, and that will bless them, and this other will make them superlatively happy." He prepared the kingdom to perfection; and then, as if that were not enough, the glorious Man, Christ Jesus, went up from earth to Heaven; and you know what He said when He departed—"I go to prepare a place for you." We know that the Infinite God can prepare a place fitting for a finite creature, but the words smile so sweetly at us as we read that Jesus Himself, who is a Man, and therefore knows our hearts' desires, has had a finger in it; *He* has prepared it, too. It is a kingdom prepared for you, upon which the thoughts of God have been set to make it excellent, "from before the foundation of the world."

But we must not pause; it is a "kingdom prepared for *you."* Mark that! I must confess I do not like certain expressions which I hear, sometimes, which imply that Heaven is prepared for some who will never reach it; prepared for those who will be driven as accursed ones into the place of torment. I know there is a sacred expression which says, "let no man take your crown," but that refers to the crown of ministerial success, rather than of Eternal Glory. An expression which grated on my ears the other evening from the lips of a certain good man ran something in this fashion: "There is a Heaven prepared for all of you, but if you are not faithful you will not win it. There is a crown in Heaven laid up for you, but if you are not faithful it will be without a wearer." I do not believe it, I cannot believe it. That the crown of Eternal Life, which is laid up for the blessed of the Father will ever be given to anybody else or left without a possessor, I do not believe. I dare not conceive of crowns in Heaven and nobody to wear them! Do you think that in Heaven, when the whole number of saints is complete, you will find a number of unused crowns? "Ah, what are these for? Where are the heads for these?" "They are in

Hell!" Then, Brother, I have no particular desire to be in Heaven, for if all the family of Christ are not there, my soul will be wretched and forlorn because of their sad loss, because I am in union with them all. If one soul that believed in Jesus does not get there I shall lose respect for the promise and respect for the Master too; He must keep His word to every soul that rests on Him. If your God has gone the length of actually preparing a place for His people, and has made provision for them and been disappointed, He is no God to me, for I could not adore a disappointed God. I do not believe in such a God. Such a being would not be God at all. The notion of disappointment in His Eternal Preparations is not consistent with Deity. Talk thus of Jupiter and Venus if you please, but the Infinite Jehovah is, as far as human speech can dishonor Him, dishonored by being mentioned in such a connection! He has prepared a place for *you!* Here is personal Election. He has made a distinct ordinance for every one of His people that where He is, there shall they be.

"Prepared from before the foundation of the world." Here is Eternal Election appearing before men were created, preparing a crown before heads were made to wear it. And so God had, before the starry skies began to gleam, carried out the decree of Election in a measure which when Christ shall come shall be perfected to the praise of the glory of His Divine Grace. "Who works all things after the counsel of His will." Our portion, then, is one prepared from all eternity for us according to the Election of God's Grace, one suitable to the loftiest character to which we can ever attain! One which will consist in nearness to Christ, communion with God, and standing forever in a place of dignity and happiness!

III. And now I have very little time to speak, as I hoped to have spoken this morning, about THE PERSONS WHO SHALL COME THERE.

They are recognizable by a secret and by a public character. Their *name* is—"Blessed of My Father"—the Father chose them, gave His Son for them, justified them through Christ, preserved them in Christ Jesus, adopted them into the family, and now accepts them into His own house. Their *nature* you have described in the word "inherit." None can inherit but children, they have been born-again, and have received the Nature of God; having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, they have become partakers of the Divine Nature—they are children. Their *appointment* is mentioned—"inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." Their name is "blessed," their nature is that of a child, their appointment is that of God's decree.

Their doings, their outward doings, these we need to speak upon a minute. They appear to have been distinguished among men for deeds of charity, and these were not in any way associated with ceremonies or outward observances. It is not said that they preached—they did, some of them; it is not said that they prayed—they must have done so or they would not have been spiritually alive. The actions which are selected as their type are actions of charity to the indigent and forlorn. Why these? I think because *the general audience assembled around the Throne would know how to appreciate this evidence of their new-born nature.* The King might think more of their prayers than of their alms, but the multitude would not. He speaks so as to gain the verdict of all assembled. Even

their enemies could not object to His calling those blessed who had performed these actions; for if there is an action which wins for men the universal consent, it is an action by which men would be served. Against this there is no law. I have never heard of a state in which there was a law against clothing the naked and feeding the hungry. Humanity at once, when its conscience is so seared that it cannot see its own sinfulness, yet detects the virtuousness of feeding the poor. Doubtless this is one reason why these actions were selected. And again, they may have been chosen as evidences of Divine Grace, because, *as actions, they are a wonderful means of separating between the hypocrite and the true Christian.*

Dr. Gill has an idea, and perhaps he is right, that this is not a picture of the General Judgment, but of the judgment of the professing Church, and if so, it is all the more reasonable to conclude that these works of mercy are selected as the appropriate discerner between the hypocrite and the sincere. I fear that there are some of you high professors who could not stand the test. "Good praying people" they call you, but what do you give to the Lord? Your religion has not touched your pockets. This does not apply to some of you, for there are many here of whom I would venture to speak before the bar of God that I know their substance to be consecrated to the Lord and His poor, and I have sometimes thought that beyond their means they have given both to the poor and to God's cause. But there are others of a very different disposition. Now here I shall give you a little plain English talk which none can fail to understand. You may talk about your religion till you have worn your tongue out, and you may get others to believe you; and you may remain in the Church 20 years and nobody ever detect in you anything like an inconsistency; but if it is in your power, and you do nothing to relieve the necessities of the poor members of Christ's body, you will be damned as surely as if you were drunkards or whoremongers! If you have no care for God's Church this text applies to you—and you will as surely sink to the lowest Hell as if you had been common blasphemers! That is very plain English, but it is the plain meaning of my text, and it is at my peril that I flinch from telling you of it. "I was hungry, and you gave me"—what? Good advice? Yes, but no food. "I was thirsty, and you gave me"—what? A tract? And no drink. "I was naked, and you gave me"—what? Your good wishes? But no clothes. I was a stranger and—you pitied me, but you did not take me in. I was sick—you said you could recommend me a doctor, but you did not visit me. I was in prison, I, God's servant, a persecuted one, put in prison for Christ's sake, and you said I should be more cautious, but you did not stand by my side and take a share of the blame, and bear with me reproach for the Truth for God's sake!

You see, this is a very terrible winnowing fan to some of you cowardly ones whose main objective is to get all you can and hold it fast, but it is a fan which frequently must be used. Some may deceive you, and spare you—but by the Grace of God I will not, but will labor to be more bold than ever in denouncing sin. "Well," says one, "what are those to do who are so poor that they have nothing to give away?" My dear Brothers and Sisters, do you notice how beautifully the text takes care of you? It hints that there are some who cannot give bread to the hungry, and clothes to

the naked, but what about them? Why, you see, they are the persons spoken of as, "My Brethren," who *receive* the kindness, so that this passage comforts the poor and by no means condemns them. Certain of us honestly give to the poor all we can spare, and then, of course, everybody comes to us! And when we say, "Really, I cannot give any more," somebody snarls and says, "Call yourself a Christian?" "Yes, I do. I would not call myself a Christian if I gave away other people's money; I should not call myself a Christian if I gave away what I have not got—I would call myself a thief—pretending to be charitable when I could not pay my debts." I have a very great pity indeed for those people who get into the Bankruptcy Court. I do not mean the debtors. I have seldom much sympathy with them—I have a good deal for the creditors who lose by having trusted dishonest people. If any man should say, "I will live beyond my means in order to get a good character," my dear Brothers and Sisters, you are wrong! That action is in itself wrong! What you have to give must be that which is your own. "But I shall have to pinch myself," says one, "if I do it." Well, pinch yourself! I do not think there is half the pleasure in doing good till you get to the pinching point; this remark, of course, applies only to those of us of moderate means who can soon distribute our alms and get down to the pinch point.

When you begin to feel, "Now, I must go without that; now I must curtail these in order to do more good." Oh, you cannot tell; it is THEN when you can really feel, "Now I have not given God merely the cheese parings and candle ends that I could not use, but I have really cut out for my Master a good piece of the loaf! I have not given Him the old crusts that were getting moldy, but I have given Him a piece of my own daily bread, and I am glad to do it if I can show my love to Jesus Christ by denying myself!" If you are doing this, if you are thus, out of love to Jesus, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, I believe that these are put down as tests—because they are such blessed detectives between the hypocrites and the really godly people. When you read "for" here, you must not understand it to be that their reward is *because* of this, but that they are proven to be God's servants by this; and so, while they do not merit it because of these actions, yet these actions show that they were saved by Grace, which is evidenced by the fact that Jesus Christ worked such works in them. If Christ does not work such things in you, you have no part in Him; if you have not produced such works as these you have not believed in Jesus.

Now somebody says, "Then I intend to give to the poor in the future in order that I may have this reward." Ah, but you are very much mistaken if you do that. The Duke of Burgundy was waited upon by a poor man, a very loyal subject, who brought him a very large root which he had grown. He was a very poor man, indeed, and every root he grew in his garden was of consequence to him; but merely as a loyal offering he brought to his prince the largest his little garden produced. The prince was so pleased with the man's evident loyalty and affection, that he gave him a very large sum of money. The steward thought, "Well, I see this pays; this man has got fifty pounds for his large root, I think *I* shall give the duke a present." So he bought a horse and he reckoned that he should have in return ten times as much for it as it was worth, and he

presented it with that view. The duke, like a wise man, quietly accepted the horse, and gave the greedy steward nothing. That was all. So you say, "Well, here is a Christian, and he gets rewarded. He has been giving to the poor, helping the Lord's Church, and see he is saved; the thing pays, I shall make a little investment." Yes, but you see the steward did not give the horse out of any idea of loyalty, or kindness, or love to the duke, but out of very great love to himself, and therefore had no return. And if you perform deeds of charity out of the idea of getting to Heaven by them, why it is yourself that you are feeding, it is yourself that you are clothing; all your virtue is not virtue, it is rank selfishness, it smells strong of selfhood, and Christ will never accept it; you will never hear Him say, "Thank you" for it. You served *yourself*, and no reward is due.

You must first come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and look to Him to save you; you must forever renounce all idea of doing anything to save yourself, and being saved, you will be able to give to the poor and so on without selfishness mixing with your motive—and you will get a reward of Divine Grace for the love token which you have given. It is necessary to believe in Christ in order to be capable of true virtue of the highest order; it is necessary to trust Jesus, and to be, yourself, fully saved, before there is any value in your feeding the hungry or clothing the naked. God give you Grace to go to my Master wounded yonder, and to rest in the precious Atonement which He has made for human sin. And when you have done that, being loved at such a rate, may you show that you love in return; being purchased so dearly, may you live for Him Who bought you; and among the actions by which you prove it, let these gleam and glisten like God-given jewels—the visiting of the sick, the comforting of the needy, the relieving of the distressed, and the helping of the weak.

God accept these offerings as they come from gracious souls, and to Him be praise evermore. Amen.

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THE RAVENS' CRY
NO. 672

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 14, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry."
Psalm 147:9.

I SHALL open this sermon with a quotation. I must give you, in Caryl's own words his note upon ravens. "Naturalists tell us, that when the raven has fed his young in the nest till they are well fledged and able to fly abroad, he thrusts them out of the nest, and will not let them abide there, but puts them out to get their own living. Now when these young ones are upon their first flight from their nest, and are little acquainted with means how to help themselves with food, then the Lord provides food for them. It is said by credible authorities that the raven is marvelously strict and severe in this; for as soon as his young ones are able to provide for themselves, he will not fetch any more food for them; yes, some affirm the old ones will not allow them to stay in the same country where they were bred; and if so, then they must wander. We say proverbially, 'Need makes the old wife trot,' we may say, 'and the young ones too.'" It has been, and possibly is, the practice of some parents towards their children, who, as soon as they can shift for themselves, and are fit in any competency to get their bread, to turn them out of doors as the raven does his young ones out of the nest. Now, said the Lord in the text, when the young ones of the raven are in this pinch, that they are turned off, and wander for lack of food, who then provides for them? Do not I, the Lord? Do not I, who provide for the old raven, provide for his young ones, both while they abide in the nest and when they wander for lack of food?"

Solomon sent the sluggard to the ant, and learned himself lessons from conies, greyhounds, and spiders—let us be willing to be instructed by any of God's creatures, and go to the ravens' nest tonight to learn as in a school.

To the pure nothing is unclean, and to the wise nothing is trivial. Let the superstitious dread the raven as a bird of ill omen, and let the thoughtless see nothing but a winged thing in glossy black, we are willing to see more, and doubtless shall not be unrewarded if we are but teachable. Noah's raven brought him back no olive branch, but ours may! And it may even come to pass that ravens may bring us food tonight as of old they fed Elijah by Cherith's brook. Our blessed Lord once derived a very potent argument from ravens—an argument intended to comfort and cheer those of His servants who were oppressed with needless anxieties about their temporal circumstances. To such he said, "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feeds them: how much more are you

better than the fowls?" Following the Master's logic—which you will all agree must have been sound, for He was never untruthful in His reasoning any more than in His statements—I shall argue tonight on this wise: Consider the ravens as they cry; with harsh, inarticulate, croaking notes they make known their needs, and your heavenly Father answers their prayer, and sends them food. You, too, have begun to pray and to seek His favor—are you not much better than they? Does God care for ravens, and will he not care for you? Does He not hearken to the cries of the unfledged ravens in their nests, when they are hungry and cry unto Him to be fed? Does He, I say, supply them in answer to their cries, and will He not answer you, poor trembling children of men who are seeking His face and favor through Christ Jesus? The whole business of this evening will be just simply to work that one thought out. I shall aim tonight, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to say something to those who have been praying for mercy, but as yet have not received it; who have gone on their knees, perhaps for months, with one exceedingly great and bitter cry, but as yet know not the way of peace.

Their sin still hangs like a millstone about their neck; they sit in the Valley of the Shadow of Death; no light has dawned upon them, and they are wringing their hands and moaning, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He shut His ear against the prayers of seeking souls? Will He be mindful of sinners' piteous cries no more? Will penitents' tears drop upon the earth, and no longer move His compassion?" Satan, too, is telling you, dear Friends, who are now in this state of mind, that God will never hear you, that He will let you cry till you die; that you shall pant out your life in sighs and tears, and that at the end you shall be cast into the Lake of Fire! I long, tonight, to give you some comfort and encouragement; I want to urge you to cry yet more vehemently! Come to the Cross and lay hold of it, and vow that you will never leave its shadow till you find the gift which your soul covets. I want to move you, if God the Holy Spirit shall help me, so that you will say within yourselves, like Queen Esther, "I will go in unto the King, and if I perish, I perish." And may you add to that the vow of Jacob, "I will not let You go, except You bless me!"

Here, then, is the question in hand—GOD HEARS THE YOUNG RAVENS; WILL HE NOT HEAR YOU?

I. I argue that He will, first, when I remember that *He hears the lowly raven cry, and that you, in some sense, are much better than a raven.* The raven is but a poor unclean bird, whose instant death would make no sort of grievous gap in Creation. If thousands of ravens had their necks wrung tomorrow, I do not know that there would be any vehement grief and sorrow in the universe about them; it would simply be a number of poor birds dead, and that would be all. *But you are an immortal soul.* The raven is gone when life is over, there is no raven any longer; but when your present life is past, you have not ceased to be; you are but launched upon the sea of life; you have but begun to live forever. You will see earth's hoary mountains crumble to nothingness before your immortal spirit shall expire; the moon shall have paled her feeble light, and the

sun's more mighty fires shall have been quenched in perpetual darkness, and yet your spirit shall still be marching on in its everlasting course—an everlasting course of misery, unless God hears your cry—

"Oh, that truth immense,
This mortal, immortality shall wear!
The pulse of mind shall never cease to play;
By God awakened, it forever throbs,
Eternal as His own eternity!
Above the angels, or below the fiends:
To mount in Glory, or in shame descend—
Mankind is destined by resistless doom."

Do you think, then, that God will hear the poor bird that is and is not, is here a moment and is blotted out of existence, and will He not hear you, an immortal soul, whose duration is to be co-equal with His own? I think it surely must strike you that if He hears the dying raven, He will also hear an undying man. The ancients said of Jupiter that he was not at leisure to mind little things, but Jehovah condescends to care for the least of His creatures, and even looks into birds' nests; will He not mercifully care for spirits who are heirs of a dread eternity?

Moreover, I never heard that ravens were made in the image of God; but I do find that, defiled, deformed, and debased as our race is, yet originally God said, "Let Us make man in Our own Image." There is something about man which is not to be found in the lower creatures, the best and noblest of whom are immeasurably beneath the meanest child of Adam. A council was held as to the creation of man, and in his mind, and even in the adaptation of his body to assist the mind, there is a marvelous display of the wisdom of the Most High. Bring here the most deformed, obscure, and wicked of the human race, and—though I dare not flatter human nature morally—yet there is a dignity about the fact of manhood which is not to be found in all the beasts of the field, be they what they may. Behemoth and Leviathan are put in subjection beneath the foot of man; the eagle cannot soar as high as man's soul mounts, nor the lion feed on such royal meat as man's spirit hungers after. And do you think that God will hear so low and so mean a creature as a raven, and yet not hear *you, when you are one of the race that was formed in His own Image?* Oh, think not so harshly and so foolishly of Him whose ways are always equal! I will put this to yourselves. Does not Nature itself teach that man is to be cared for above the fowls of the air? If you heard the cries of young ravens, you might feel compassion enough for those birds to give them food if you knew how to feed them, but I cannot believe that any of you would succor the birds, and yet would not fly upon the wings of compassion to the rescue of a perishing infant whose cries you might hear from the place where it was cast by cruel neglect! If, in the stillness of the night, you heard the plaintive cry of a man expiring in sickness, unpitied in the streets, would you not arise and help him? I am sure you would if you are one who would help a raven. If you have any compassion for a raven, surely much more would you have pity upon a man. I know it is whispered that there are some simpletons who care more for houseless dogs than for houseless men and women—and yet it

is far more probable that those who feel for dogs are those who care most tenderly for men; at any rate, I should feel a strong presumption in their favor if I needed aid. And do you not think that God, the All-Wise One, when He cares for these unfledged birds in the nest, will be sure also to care for you? Your heart says, "Yes," then from now on answer the unbelief of your heart by turning its own just reasoning against it.

But I hear you say, "Ah, but the raven is not sinful as I am; it may be an unclean bird, but it cannot be so unclean as I am morally; it may be black in hue, but I am black with sin; a raven cannot break the Sabbath, cannot swear, cannot commit adultery; a raven cannot be a drunkard, it cannot defile itself with vices such as those with which I am polluted." I know all that, Friend, and it may seem to you to make your case more hopeless, but I do not think it really does so. Just think of it for a minute. What does this prove? *Why, that you are a creature capable of sinning, and, consequently, that you are an intelligent spirit living in a sense in which a raven does not live.* You are a creature moving in the spirit-world; you belong to the world of souls in which the raven has no portion. The raven cannot sin, because it has no spirit, no soul; but you are an intelligent agent of which the better part is your soul. Now, as the soul is infinitely more precious than the body, and as the raven—I am speaking popularly now—is nothing but body while *you* are evidently soul as well as body, or else you would not be capable of sinning, I see even in that black discouraging thought some gleam of light. Does God care for flesh, and blood, and bones, and black feathers, and will He not care for your reason, your will, your judgment, your conscience, your immortal soul? Oh, if you will but think of it, you must see that it is not possible for a raven's cry to gain an audience of the ear of Divine Benevolence, and for your prayer to be despised and disregarded by the Most High—

"The insect that with puny wings,
Just shoots along one summer's ray.
The flower which the breath of Spring
Wakes into life for half a day.
The smallest mote, the most tender hair,
All feel our heavenly Father's care."

Surely, then, He will have respect unto the cry of the humble, and will not refuse their prayer.

I can hardly leave this point without remarking that the mention of a raven should encourage a sinner. As an old author writes, "Among fowls He does not mention the hawk or falcon, which are highly prized and fed by princes, but He chooses that hateful and malicious bird, the croaking raven, whom no man values but as she eats up the carrion which might annoy him. Behold then, and wonder at the Providence and kindness of God, that He should provide food for the raven, a creature of so dismal a hue, and of so untuneable a tone—a creature that is so odious to most men, and ominous to some. There is a great Providence of God seen in providing for the ant, who gathers her food in summer—but a greater in the raven, who, though he forgets, or is careless to provide for himself, yet God provides and lays up for him." One would think the Lord should

say of ravens, Let them shift for themselves or perish; no, the Lord God does not despise any work of His hands; the raven has his being from God, and therefore the raven shall be provided for by Him. Not only the fair innocent dove, but the ugly raven has his food from God. Which clearly shows that the lack of excellence in you, you black, raven-like sinner, will not prevent your cry from being heard in Heaven! Unworthiness the blood of Jesus shall remove, and defilement He shall utterly cleanse away. Only believe on Jesus, and you shall find peace.

II. Then, in the next place, *there is a great deal of difference between your cry and the cry of a raven.* When the young ravens cry, I suppose they scarcely know what they need. They have a natural instinct which makes them cry for food, but their cry does not, in itself, express their need. You would soon find out, I suppose, that they *meant* food; but they have no articulate speech; they do not utter so much as a single word; it is just a constant, croaking, craving cry, and that is all. But *you* do know what you need, and few as your words are, your heart knows its own bitterness and dire distress; your sighs and groans have an obvious meaning; your understanding is at the right hand of your hungry heart. You know that you need peace and pardon; you know that you need Jesus, His precious blood, His perfect Righteousness. Now, if God hears such a strange, chattering, indistinct cry as that of a raven, don't you think that He will also hear the rational and expressive prayer of a poor, needy, guilty soul who is crying unto Him, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? Surely your reason tells you that!

Moreover, *the young ravens cannot use arguments, for they have no understanding.* They cannot say as you can—

"He knows what arguments I'd take
To wrestle with my God,
I'd plead for His own mercy's sake,
And for a Savior's blood."

They have one argument, namely, their dire necessity, which forces their cry from them, but beyond this they cannot go; and even this they cannot set forth in order, or describe in language. But you have a multitude of arguments ready at hand, and you have an understanding with which to set them in array, and marshal them to besiege the Throne of Grace. Surely, if the mere plea of the unuttered need of the raven prevails with God, much more shall you prevail with the Most High if you can argue your case before Him, and come unto Him with arguments in your mouth. Come, despairing one, and try my Lord! I do beseech you, now, let that doleful ditty ascend into the ears of Mercy! Open that bursting heart and let it out in tears, if words are beyond your power!

A raven, however, I fear has sometimes a great advantage over some sinners who seek God in prayer, namely in this: *young ravens are more in earnest about their food than some are about their souls.* This, however, is no discouragement to you, but rather a reason why you should be more earnest than you have been. When ravens need food, they do not cease crying till they have it; there is no quieting a hungry young raven till his mouth is full, and there is no quieting a sinner when he is really in earnest till he gets his heart full of Divine Mercy. I would that some of

you prayed more vehemently! "The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." An old Puritan said, "Prayer is a cannon set at the gate of Heaven to burst open its gates." You must take the city by storm if you would have it. You will not ride to Heaven on a featherbed, you must go on pilgrimage; there is no going to the land of Glory while you are sound asleep—dreamy sluggards will have to wake up in Hell! If God has made you to feel in your soul the need of salvation, cry like one who is awake and alive. Be in earnest! Cry aloud! Spare not! And then I think you will find that my argument will be quite fair—that in all respects a reasonable, argumentative, intelligent prayer is more likely to prevail with God than the mere screaming, chattering noise of the raven, and that if He hears such a cry as the raven's—it is much more certain that He will hear yours.

III. Remember that *the matter of your prayer is more congenial to the ear of God than the raven's cry for food.* All that the young ravens call for is food; give them a little carrion and they have done. Your cry must be much more pleasing to God's ear, for you entreat for forgiveness through the blood of His dear Son. It is a nobler occupation for the Most High to be bestowing spiritual than natural gifts; the streams of Divine Grace flow from the upper springs. I know He is so condescending that He does not dishonor Himself even when He drops food into the young raven's mouth, but still there is more honor about the work of giving peace, and pardon, and reconciliation to the sons of men. Eternal Love appointed a way of mercy from before the foundation of the world, and Infinite Wisdom is engaged with boundless power to carry out the Divine Design; surely the Lord must take much pleasure in saving the sons of men! If God is pleased to supply the beast of the field, do you not think that He delights much more to supply His own children? I think you would find more congenial employment in teaching your own children, than you would in merely foddering your ox, or scattering barley among the fowls at the barn door; because there would be in the first work something nobler, which would more fully call up all your powers, and bring out your inward self.

I am not left here to conjecture. It is written, "He delights in mercy." When God uses His power He cannot be sad, for He is a happy God; but if there is such a thing possible as the Infinite Deity being more happy at one time than at another, it is when He is forgiving sinners through the precious blood of Jesus. Ah, Sinner, when you cry to God you give Him an opportunity to do that which He loves most to do! He delights to forgive, to press His Ephraim to His bosom, to say of His prodigal son, "He was lost, but is found; he was dead, but is alive again." This is more comfortable to the Father's heart than the feeding of the fatted calf, or tending the cattle of a thousand hills. Since then, dear Friends, you are asking for something which will honor God far more to give than the mere gift of food to ravens, I think there comes a very forcible blow of my argumentative hammer tonight to break your unbelief in pieces! May God the Holy Spirit, the true Comforter, work in you mightily! Surely the God

who gives food to ravens will not deny peace and pardon to seeking sinners. Try Him! Try Him at this moment! No, stir not! Try Him *now!*

IV. We must not pause on any one point when the whole subject is so prolific. There is another source of comfort for you, namely, that *the ravens are nowhere commanded to cry. When they cry, their petition is unwarranted by any specific exhortation from the Divine Mouth, but you have a warrant derived from Divine Exhortations to approach the Throne of God in prayer.* If a rich man should open his house to those who were *not* invited, he would surely receive those who *were* invited. Ravens come without being bid to come, yet they are not sent away empty; you are commanded to come as an invited guest—how shall you be denied? Do you think you are not bid to come? Listen to this—"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." "Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel *to every creature;* he who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus." These are exhortations given without any limitation as to character. They freely invite you; no, they bid you come. Oh, after this can you think that God will spurn you? The window is open, the raven flies in, and the God of Mercy does not chase it out; the door is open, and the Word of Promise bids *you* come—don't think that He will deny you, but believe rather that He will "receive you graciously, and love you freely," and then you shall "render to Him the calves of your lips." At any rate try Him! Try Him even now!

V. Again, there is yet another and a far mightier argument. *The cry of a young raven is nothing but the natural cry of a creature, but your cry, if it is sincere, is the result of a work of Divine Grace in your heart.* When the raven cries to Heaven it is nothing but the raven's own self that cries; but when you cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner"—it is God the Holy Spirit crying in you! It is the New Life which God has given you crying to the Source from where it came to have communion and communication with its great Original. It needs God Himself to set a man praying in sincerity and in truth. We can, if we think about it, teach our children to "say their prayers," but we cannot teach them to *"pray."* You may make a "prayer-book," but you cannot put a grain of "prayer" into a book, for it is too *spiritual* a matter to be encased between pages. Some of you, perhaps, may "read prayers" in the family. I will not denounce the practice, but I will say this much of it—you may read those "prayers" for 70 years, and yet you may never once pray, for prayer is quite a different thing than mere words. True prayer is the trading of the heart with God, and the heart never comes into spiritual commerce with the ports of Heaven until God the Holy Spirit puts wind into the sails and speeds the ship into its haven. "You must be born-again." If there is any *real* prayer in your heart, though you may not know the secret, God the Holy Spirit is there. Now if He hears cries that do not come from Himself, how much more will He hear those that do! Perhaps you have been puzzling yourself

to know whether your cry is a natural or a spiritual one. This may seem very important, and doubtless is so—but whether your cry is either the one or the other, still continue to seek the Lord!

Possibly you doubt whether natural cries are heard by God; let me assure you that they are. I remember saying something on this subject on one occasion in a certain Ultra-Calvinistic place of worship. At that time I was preaching to children, and was exhorting them to pray. I happened to say that long before any actual conversion I had prayed for common mercies, and that God had heard my prayers. This did not suit my good Brethren of the superfine school; and afterwards they all came round me professedly to know what I meant, but really to cavil and carp according to their nature and practice. "They compassed me about like bees; yes, like bees they compassed me about!" After awhile, as I expected, they fell to their usual amusement of calling names. They began to say what rank Arminianism this was; and another expression they were pleased to honor me with, was the title of "Fullerist"—a title, by the way, so honorable that I could heartily have thanked them for appending it to what I had advanced. But to say that God should hear the prayer of natural men was something worse than Arminianism to them, if, indeed, anything could be worse! They quoted that counterfeit passage, "The prayer of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord," which I speedily answered by asking them if they would find me that text in the Word of God, for I ventured to assert that the devil was the author of that saying, and that it was not in the Bible at all.

"The *sacrifice* of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord" is in the Bible, but that is a very different thing from the "*prayer* of the wicked." And moreover there is a decided difference between the word wicked there intended and the natural man about whom we were arguing. I do not think that a man who begins to pray in any sense can be considered as being altogether among "the wicked" intended by Solomon, and certainly he is not among those who turn away their ears from hearing the Law, of whom it is written that their prayer is an abomination. "Well, but," they said, "how could it be that God could hear a natural prayer?" And while I paused for a moment, an old woman in a red cloak pushed her way into the little circle round me, and said to them in very forcible way, like a mother in Israel as she was, "Why do you raise this question, forgetting what God Himself has said! What is this you say, that God does not hear natural prayer? Why, doesn't He hear the young ravens when they cry unto Him? And do you think *they* offer *spiritual* prayers?" Straightway the men of war took to their heels; no defeat was more thorough; and for once in their lives they must have felt that they might possibly err. Surely, Brothers and Sisters, this may encourage and comfort *you*.

I am not going to set you just now to the task of finding out whether your prayers are natural or spiritual, whether they come from God's Spirit or whether they do not, because that might, perhaps, discourage you. If the prayer proceeds from your very heart, we know how it got there, though you may not. God hears the ravens, and I do believe He

will hear you, and I believe, moreover, though I do not now want to raise the question in your heart, that He hears your prayer, because—though you may not know it—there is a secret work of the Spirit of God going on within you which is teaching you to pray.

VI. But I have mightier arguments, and nearer the mark. *When the young ravens cry, they cry alone, But when you pray you have a mightier One than you praying with you.* Hear that sinner crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Listen! Do you hear that other cry which goes up with his? No, *you* do not hear it because your ears are dull and heavy, but God hears it. There is another voice, far louder and sweeter than the first, and far more prevalent, mounting up at the same moment, and pleading, "Father, forgive them through My precious blood." The echo to the sinner's whisper is as majestic as the thunder's peal. Never sinner prays truly without Christ praying at the same time. You cannot see nor hear Him, but never does Jesus stir the depths of your soul by His Spirit without His soul being stirred, too. Oh, Sinner, your prayer, when it comes before God, is a very different thing from what it is when it issues forth from you. Sometimes poor people come to us with petitions which they wish to send to some Company or great Personage. They bring the petition and ask us to have it presented for them. It is very badly spelt, very strangely written, and we can but just make out what they mean; but still, there is enough to let us know what they need. First of all we make out a fair copy for them, and then, having stated their case, we put our own name at the bottom, and if we have any interest, of course they get what they desire through the power of the name signed at the bottom of the petition. This is just what the Lord Jesus Christ does with our poor prayers. He makes a fair copy of them, stamps them with the seal of His own Atoning blood, puts His own name at the bottom, and thus they go up to God's Throne. It is *your* prayer, but oh, it is HIS prayer, too! And it is the fact of its being *His* prayer that makes it prevail. Now, this is a sledge hammer argument—if the ravens prevail when they cry all alone, if their poor chattering brings them what they need of themselves, how much more shall the plaintive petitions of the poor trembling sinner prevail who can say, "For Jesus' sake," and who can clench all his own arguments with the blessed plea, "The Lord Jesus Christ deserves it! O Lord, give it to me for His sake."

I do trust that these seeking ones to whom I have been speaking, who have been crying so long and yet are afraid that they shall never be heard, may not have to wait much longer, but may soon have a gracious answer of peace; and if they shall not just yet get the desire of their hearts, I hope that they may be encouraged to persevere till the Day of Grace shall dawn. *You have a promise which the ravens have not,* and that might make another argument if time permitted us to dwell upon it. Trembler, having a promise to plead, never fear but that you shall be heard at the Throne of Grace!

And now, let me say to the sinner, in closing, IF YOU HAVE CRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY, STILL CRY ON. "Go again seven times," yes, and 70 times seven! Remember that the mercy of God in Christ Jesus is your

only hope; cling to it, then, as a drowning man clings to the only rope within reach. If you perish praying for mercy through the precious blood, you will be the first that ever perished so. Cry on; just cry on; but oh, *believe*, too; for believing brings the morning star and the day dawn. When John Ryland's wife, Betty, lay dying, she was in great distress of mind, though she had been for many years a Christian. Her husband said to her in his quaint but wise way, "Well, Betty, what ails you?" "Oh, John, I am dying, and I have no hope, John!" "But, my Dear, where are you going, then?" "I am going to Hell!" was the answer. "Well," he said, covering up his deep anguish with his usual humor, and meaning to strike a blow that would be sure to hit the nail on the head and put her doubts to speedy flight, "What do you intend doing when you get there, Betty?" The good woman could give no answer, and Mr. Ryland continued, "Do you think you will pray when you get there?" "Oh, John," she said, "I would pray anywhere. I cannot help praying!" "Well, then," said he, "they will say, 'Here is Betty Ryland praying here in Hell. Throw her out! We won't have anybody praying here! Throw her out!" This strange way of putting it brought light to her soul, and she saw at once the absurdity of the very suspicion of a soul really seeking Christ, and yet being cast away forever from His Presence! Cry on, Soul! Cry on! While the child can cry, it lives; and while you can besiege the Throne of Mercy, there is hope for you! But *hear* as well as cry, and believe what you hear, for it is by *believing* that peace is obtained.

But stay awhile, I have something else to say. Is it possible that you may have already obtained the very blessing you are crying after? "Oh," you say, "I would not ask for a thing which I already had! If I knew I had it, I would leave off crying, and begin praising and blessing God." Now, I do not know whether all of you seekers are in so safe a state, but I am persuaded that there are some seeking souls who have received the mercy for which they are asking. The Lord, instead of saying to them tonight, "Seek you My face," is saying, "Why do you cry unto Me? I have heard you in an acceptable hour, and in an acceptable time have I succored you. I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities. I have saved you. You are Mine. I have cleansed you from all your sins. Go your way and rejoice." In such a case *believing praise* is more suitable than agonizing prayer.

"Oh," you say, "But it is not likely that I have the mercy while I am still seeking for it." Well, I don't know. Mercy sometimes falls down in a fainting fit outside the gate; is it not possible for her to be taken inside while she is in the fainting fit, and for her to think all the while that she is still on the outside? She can hear the dog still barking, but ah, poor Soul, when she comes to, she will find that she is inside the wicket and is safe! So some of you may happen to have fallen into a swoon of despondency just when you are coming to Christ. If so, may Sovereign Grace restore you, and perhaps I may be the means, tonight, of doing it.

What is it you are looking after? Some of you are expecting to see bright visions, but I hope you never may be gratified, for they are not worth a penny a thousand! All the visions in the world since the days of

miracles, put together, are but mere dreams, after all—and dreams are nothing but vanity! People eat too much supper and then dream; it is indigestion, or a morbid activity of the brain, and that is all! If that is all the evidence you have of conversion you will do well to doubt it; I pray you never to rest satisfied with it; it is wretched rubbish to build your eternal hopes upon. Perhaps you are looking for very strange feelings—not quite an electric shock, but something very singular and peculiar. Believe me, you need never feel the strange motions which you prize so highly. All those strange feelings which some people speak of in connection with conversion may or may not be of any good to them, but I am certain that they really have nothing to do with conversion so as to be at all necessary to it. I will put a question or two to you. Do you believe yourself to be a sinner? "Yes," you say. But supposing I put that word "sinner" away? Do you mean that you believe you have broken God's Law, that you are a good-for-nothing offender against God's government? Do you believe that you have in your heart, at any rate, broken all the Commandments, and that you deserve punishment accordingly? "Yes," you say, "I not only believe that, but I feel it; it is a burden that I carry about with me daily." Now something more—do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can put all this sin of yours away? Yes, you do believe that. Then, can you trust Him to save you? You *need* saving; you cannot save yourself; can you trust *Him* to save you? "Yes," you say, "I already do that." Well, my dear Friend, if you really trust Jesus, it is certain that you are saved, for you have the only evidence of salvation which is continual with any of us. There are other evidences which follow afterwards, such as holiness and the Graces of the Spirit, but the only evidence that is continual with the best of men living is this—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling.

Can you use Jack the huckster's verse—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All in All"?

I hope you will go a great deal farther in experience on some points than this, by and by, but I do not want you to advance an inch farther as to the ground of your evidence and the reason for your hope. Just stop there, and if now you look away from everything that is within you or without you to Jesus Christ, and trust to His sufferings on Calvary, and to His whole Atoning work as the ground of your acceptance before God, you are saved! You do not need anything more! You have passed from death unto life. "He who believes on Him is not condemned." "He who believes has everlasting life." If I were to meet an angel presently in that aisle as I go out of my door into my vestry, and he should say—"Charles Spurgeon, I have come from Heaven to tell you that you are pardoned," I would say to him—"I know *that* without your telling me anything of the kind; I know it on a great deal better authority than yours." And if he asked me how I knew it, I would reply, "The Word of God is better to me than the word of an angel, and He has said it—'He who believes on Him is not condemned.' I do believe on Him, and therefore I am not condemned—and I know it without an *angel* to tell me so." Do not, you

troubled ones, be looking after angels, and tokens, and evidences, and signs. If you rest on the finished work of Jesus, you have already the best evidence of your salvation in the world! You have God's Word for it—what more is needed? Cannot you take God's Word? You can take your father's word. You can take your mother's word—why can't you take God's Word? Oh, what base hearts we must have to suspect God Himself!

Perhaps you say you would not do such a thing. Oh, but you doubt God, if you do not trust Christ—for, "he who believes not has made God a liar." If you do not trust Christ, you do in effect say that God is a liar! You do not want to say that, do you? Oh, believe the truthfulness of God! May the Spirit of God compel you to believe the Father's mercy, the power of the Son's blood, and the willingness of the Holy Spirit to bring sinners to Himself!

Come, my dear Hearers, join with me in the prayer that you may be led by Divine Grace to see in Jesus all that you need—

"Prayer is a creature's strength, his very breath and being.
Prayer is the golden key that can open the wicket of mercy.
Prayer is the magic sound that said to fate, so be it.
Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscles of Omnipotence,
Therefore, pray, O creature, for many and great are your needs.
Your mind, your conscience, and your being, your needs commend you unto prayer,
The cure of all cares, the grand panacea for all pains,
Doubt's destroyer, ruin's remedy, the antidote to all anxieties."

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SECRET SINS DRIVEN OUT BY STINGING HORNETS
NO. 673

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 28, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Moreover the Lord your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left, who hide themselves from you, are destroyed." Deuteronomy 7:20.

LET us spiritualize the story of the conquest of Canaan by the children of Israel. Canaan was given to Abraham and to his seed by a covenant of salt. Our body, soul, and spirit are given to Christ Jesus to be His portion and His heritage, and the newborn principle within us which represents the seed of Israel is to conquer the whole of our manhood for Christ, that He may have possession of it in all its powers and passions, parts and faculties. When our Lord Jesus Christ died, He died not only for our souls but also for our bodies; and He did not purchase a right to a part of us only but to the entire man. He contemplated in His Passion the sanctification of us wholly, spirit, soul, and body; that in this triple kingdom He Himself might reign supreme without a rival. It is the business of the newborn nature which God has given to the regenerate to assert the rights of the Lord Jesus Christ. "My Soul, so far as you are a child of God, you must conquer all the rest of yourself which yet remains unblest; you must subdue all your powers and passions to the silver scepter of Jesus' gracious reign, and you must never be satisfied till He who is the King by purchase becomes also the King by gracious coronation, and reigns in you supreme." Although Israel had Canaan by right, the Hivites and Jebusites and seven mighty nations had it in possession, and alas, we are made painfully to feel that though Christ has a right to us, and He alone should reign in our mortal bodies, yet sin has a dwelling place in us.

Those old sins, which were born with us, and seem as if they will never die till we, ourselves, are wrapped in our winding sheets, have entered into us and will dwell in us. I may say of our nature what was said in Egypt during the plague of frogs: "Behold these filthy things have come up into our chambers, and into our ovens, and our kneading troughs." There is no part of our heart too hot or too sacred for sin to intrude into it. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint—from the sole of the foot even to the head, naturally, there is nothing but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. Sin has entrenched itself in our nature, and it is not to be cast out by our mere talking about it nor by our best resolutions. Our sins have chariots of iron, as those of us know who have to contend with them, and their cities are walled up to Heaven; their entrenchments are so strong. Our sins have so worked themselves into our flesh, that our flesh cries out, "Spare them!" "Surely

the bitterness of death is past," said Agag when he came delicately before Samuel. And thus our sins come so delicately to us, assume such pleasant shapes, and are so congenial, that something whispers, "Let them live," it is hard to slay them; so difficult to cut them up root and branch, for they are in possession, and the new nature is but a babe! "But the old nature is the old man, and it is a very unequal fight between a babe and an old man!" The new nature has just emerged into an atmosphere which is not congenial with it, while the old nature has everything to help it; the devil from beneath, the world from without, and even the cares of business, of life; all seem to act as allies to the old nature. Meanwhile the new nature has to fight alone, except that the Eternal Spirit were not our Helper, and if He who is the Father of our new nature were not also its Support and its Succor, long ago it would have died and been utterly cut off by the hosts of its foes! Christ and holiness have a *right* to us, but sin is in possession.

What then, Beloved? Why this, that since sin has no right to any part of us, we go about a good and legal warfare when we seek, in the name of God, to drive it out! O my body, you are a member of Christ; shall I take you and subjugate you to the Prince of Darkness? O my Soul, Christ has suffered for your sins, and redeemed you with His most precious blood; shall I allow your memory to become a storehouse of evil, or your passions to become firebrands of iniquity? Shall I surrender my judgment to be perverted by error, or my will to be led in fetters of iniquity? No, my Soul, you are Christ's, and sin has no right to you. Sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under Law but under Grace. Christ has bought us and paid for us. God has willed us over to Christ; we belong to Him; we are His portion and His reward. Sin has no legal right, then, but it has possession, and you know that is nine points of the law. But we will dispute the nine points; we will bring the one grand point, that God, the Judge of All, has decided that the blood-bought belong to Christ, and we will fight it out even to the death against these our sins.

We are told if we read this Chapter in a spiritual sense, that we must in no way suffer any kind or sort of truce with sin. I believe that many Believers—I hope they are Believers—have given up warring with a part of their sins. They are not drunkards, they are not thieves; they are not given to uncleanness of walk or language; but theirs may be a hasty temper, and they do not try to subdue that. They think that that is constitutional, and they plead for it as though it must be spared. This one tribe—these Jebusites—must be spared according to their sinful talk. But oh, Beloved, I have no more right as a Christian to allow a bad temper to dwell in me than I have to allow the devil himself to dwell there. I know it has been said very often that Divine Grace is often grafted on a crab-tree stock. So it is; but in this spiritual husbandry the graft will influence all below as well as that which is above it. What is the fruit of it? Is it a crab tree? No! The fruit does not come from the crab tree, but from the better nature; and though I am grafted upon a crab tree, yet my fruit must partake of the new nature, and I must bring forth sweet fruit.

Some people think—or perhaps they may not know it—that they are *naturally* troubled with pride, that they have *naturally* a high spirit, or a haughty temper, and when they are told of it they grow rough with whomever dares to mention it, and they think this is not a sin. But, oh, Beloved, pride in a Christian is one of the most loathsome vices. What can there be in you and in me to be proud of? Owing all we have to the gift of God, having nothing but what He gives us, and going back to our own poverty unless God keeps us, how dare we lift up our head? God smote Nebuchadnezzar, and made him go and eat grass like the ox, and his hair grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds claws, all because of his pride; and some of God's dear children have been allowed to make dreadful falls of it, and all because they were lifted up and said, "I shall never be moved, my mountain stands firm." We must beware of these sins and not make a truce or parley with them. I must not say of any one sin, "I cannot help it, and therefore I will not contend with it." Beloved, down with them! Down with them all! In the name of God we must destroy them, or else they will destroy us. I may say of our sins what a Scotch officer said to his soldiers when taken in an ill position. Said he, "My lads, there are the enemy! Kill them, or they will kill you," and so must I say of all sins. There they are! Destroy them, or they will destroy you! Your only way of entering into Eternal Life is by being more than a conqueror through Him who has loved you. You know how it is written, "To him who overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna," but to such only. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

And as we are not thus to excuse some sins and permit them to live, so, above all, we must not fall into a dispirited state of mind and suppose we never can drive sins out. I do not think we shall ever be perfect in this life, but how near to perfection a Christian may come is a question which I should not like to discuss in words, but prefer endeavoring to find out in practice. How much a Believer may be like Christ I will not venture to affirm, but certainly there have been some men upon earth of whom we might say, without exaggeration, that you might take them for an example, for their Master seemed to live again in them. There is no need that you should always give way to pride, or sloth, or covetousness, or any other form of sin. You are able to overcome them—not in your own strength—the weakest of them would be too much for you in that; but you may overcome them through the blood of the Lamb. "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith," and our faith will be able to subdue these sins. Just as faith of old put to flight the armies of the aliens, so it can even to this day. Do not, then, dear Friends, ask, "How shall I dispossess them, for they are greater and mightier than I?" But go to the strong for strength, and wait humbly upon God, and He, the Mighty God of Jacob, will surely come to the rescue, and you shall have to sing of victory through His Grace.

There is a word of encouragement given in the Chapter to those who have a tendency to doubt in this matter. Israel was reminded that God brought them out of Egypt. He delivered them from the house of bondage. And you are reminded, dear Friends, that you are saved. Christ has done a greater work for you than remains to be accomplished in you.

To bear the weight of your sins, and to break the iron yoke of spiritual bondage from off your necks required that Christ should die; but that being done, it is, comparatively, but a light work to deliver you from indwelling sin. The greater work is done. Jehovah became Man in human flesh. He lived on earth. God, the Word, was made flesh and dwelt among us, and in due time stooped, in His obedience, even to death, the death of the Cross. All your sins have been destroyed by Christ, and there is no condemnation for you to dread since Christ has died. You are forgiven; the yoke is snatched from off your shoulders; you are made free by the Son, and you are free, indeed. You are in the wilderness, it is true, but you have come through the Red Sea where your sins have been drowned. Your enemies, your old sins, you shall see no more. The manna falls about your camp, the fiery, cloudy pillar leads you through the wilderness. And since you have seen what God has done, will you be afraid as to the future? Courage, courage! He never begins without intending to finish; it shall never be said of Him, "This Man began to build, but was not able to complete the structure." Courage, courage! He has not brought you out of Egypt that you may be destroyed. What would the heathen say concerning your God if after all you should fall and perish? You shall win the day; you shall have every inch of the promised land, only be strong and be very courageous, for the Lord will surely drive out your sins and take your body, soul, and spirit, as a consecrated and holy possession forever.

But there is a notion among some Christians who are but little instructed, and who know nothing of experience, that sanctification is an instantaneous work. There are some who think that the moment they believe in Jesus they shall never be troubled with any sin again, whereas, it is then that the battle begins. The moment sin is forgiven it ceases to be my friend, and becomes my deadly foe. When the guilt of sin is gone, then the power of sin becomes obnoxious, and we begin to strive against it. Every now and then we hear of friends who cannot understand my teaching on this point. They say they do not feel any sort of uprising sin within themselves. Oh, Beloved, I wish you did, for I am afraid you know nothing of the Gospel Life if you do not. I will not give a penny for your religion if it has no inward conflict. Even virtuous heathens have got farther than that, for some of them have written that they felt themselves to be as two men contending or fighting; and surely Christians have got still farther, or ought to have. This, I know, be it what it may with *you*, I have to fight every day to get but one inch nearer to Heaven, and I feel I will be wrestling at the last moment—that I shall have a scuffle upon Jordan's brink with my corruptions. Remember how John Knox had it. He had fought with men, I may say he had fought with beasts at Ephesus, and yet at his last expiring moments he had the sternest struggle he had ever known with self-righteousness. You would have thought, Surely John Knox could not be self-righteous. The man who had denounced all trusting in good works, was yet vexed with the very same thing he had denounced. And so it will be with you. No matter how near you live to God, or how closely you follow Christ, you will have more or less of evil to contend with still; no, I must say the more holy you

get, the more you will have to fight against sin. The whiter a garment becomes, the more easily is a spot seen, and the more you get like Christ, the more you will detect how unlike Him you are! A spiritual sense will be quickened so that you will discover that to be sin which you did not think to be evil; and you will often feel, when you are most progressing in Grace, you are not growing at all, or if so, certainly it seems to be downward. When I think myself most unholy, I am most holy, and when I bemoan my own sinfulness, then am I most likely to be accepted of God. It is best to think little of one's self; but whether you do or not, take this for granted, you will have to drive out your sins little by little; they will not all be cast out at once—it will be a life's work, and you will never have to take off your armor and sheath your sword, till you go to the warrior's bed and rest in the grave.

I now wish to call your attention specially to the verse before us.

It appears that after a long conflict with Canaan, some of these old inhabitants still existed. They hid themselves in caves, and so on; but they were to be fetched out by a very singular means—namely, hornets. These hornets were to discover them and bring them out—perhaps sting them to death, or, if not, make them come out to be slain by the children of Israel.

Three things are to be noticed, then, this morning. The first is, *sins which are left and saved in us, even in us who have for many years been followers of Christ;* secondly, *a singular means of destroying them;* and then, thirdly, *a suggestive lesson for us all, teaching us to examine our own hearts for these secret sins.*

I. And first, dear Friends, SINS WHICH ARE LEFT AND HIDDEN.

John Bunyan very wisely describes the town of Mansoul after it had been taken by Prince Immanuel. The Prince rode to the Castle called the Heart and took possession of it, and the whole city became His. But there were certain Diabolonians, followers of Diabolus, who never left the town. They could not be seen in the streets, could not be heard in the markets, never dared to occupy a house, but lurked about in certain old dens and caves. Some of them got impudent enough even to hire themselves out for servants to the men of Mansoul under other names. There was Mr. Covetousness, who was called Mr. Prudent Thrifty, and there was Mr. Lasciviousness, who was called Mr. Harmless Mirth. They took other names, and lived here, much to the annoyance of the town of Mansoul, skulking about in holes and corners, and only coming out on dark days, when they could do mischief and serve the Black Prince. Now in all of us, however watchful we may be, though we may set Mr. Pry Well to listen at the door and he may watch, and my Lord Mayor, Mr. Understanding, is very careful to search all these out, yet there will remain much hidden sin. I think we ought always to pray to God to forgive us sins that we do not know anything about. "Your unknown agonies," says the old Greek liturgy; and there are unknown sins for which those agonies make atonement. Perhaps the sins which you and I confess are not a tenth of what we really commit. Our eyes are not sufficiently opened to know of the heinousness of our own sin, and it is possible that if we could fully know the extent of our own sinfulness it would drive us mad. It is

possible that God, in His mercy, allows us to be somewhat blind to the abominable accursedness of sin. He gives us enough of it to make us hate it, but not enough to drive us absolutely to despair. Our sin is exceedingly sinful.

Now allow me to suggest that among the sins which lurk in us there is the old one of unbelief. You have had a very great deliverance, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and you think you have no more unbelief left in you. You do not know that old villain, Unbelief, is never to be taken by the heels, or if he is put in the stocks, he soon manages to escape. You will have unbelief this very afternoon, if you happen to meet with any trouble, and though now you say, "I never can stagger at the promise through unbelief," I should not wonder but what a little depression of spirits, perhaps weariness in God's service, might make you to be as doubting as ever you were in your life. Do not harbor the pleasing delusion that your unbelief is dead. It is hidden, but it will come out again.

Especially among these lurkers I must mention pride. Oh, we think, "How could I be proud? Why I—I have been through such an experience of my own weakness and sinfulness that I cannot be proud." We little think that all the while we are talking, we are saying about the proudest thing that we could possibly say. I talked once, I remember, with a man who thought himself a very eminent Christian. He told me that what with affliction and experience the Lord had wiped pride completely out of him. I said, "He must have hit you very hard, Brother." I thought, while he was talking, he was the incarnation of pride, but I did not remember that I, myself, was probably quite as bad for thinking I should not like to have talked as he did. Pride is such a cunning thing; it likes to wear the robes of a prince, but it is satisfied to wear the rags of a beggar if it cannot. As long as it may get into our hearts, it cares not what shape it assumes. That detestable sin of pride, we can all condemn it in other people, and yet probably we have each one got a leaven of it, even in our spirits at this very moment. You are a proud thing, my Brother; you are a proud thing, my Sister. There is still pride lurking in us all.

And beside these there is also a great amount of wrath and ill temper in us. Oh, we think there is no one as good-tempered as we are, we have not betrayed ourselves into an angry word for months. Yes, but it is very easy to be good-tempered when you have it all your own way. It is a very easy thing to be amiable, and kind, and loving, and never to be angry when the wife is so kind, and the children obedient, and the servants attentive, and business prospers; but, my dear Brothers and Sisters, how would it be if matters were to change, and they may very soon? Suppose you were irritated as Brother So-and-So is—what then? You know we are not to judge the man by the circumstances—we must judge him intrinsically by himself. A barrel of gunpowder is not very dangerous to sit upon or to have under one's bed at night, or to make a pillow of; it is a very safe thing indeed, provided that there is no fire anywhere about. It has not blown up, and yet it has been under one's couch all the while. Ah, but if the sparks had happened to fly, as they do fly in your neighbor's house across the road, can you say that your powder is quite

different from his powder? And I think sometimes when we think we have destroyed anger, and put down the tendency of wrath, it is only because the Canaanite has hidden himself and we cannot see him, but he is still there, and may come out again one day.

So is it often with our discontent and rebellion. I do not know that I am discontent—several of you can say the same. You feel happy this morning, grateful and thankful—you can sing—

"I would not change my blest estate
For all the earth calls good or great."

Yes, but you must not be too sure that you have no discontent left in your heart. Now suppose—and the supposition is so easy to make—suppose your best beloved should sicken and die? You can bless a giving God—could you bless a taking God? Suppose that your riches took to themselves wings, and every one of them should fly away? Could you still praise the God who is as good when He takes as when He gives? Brothers and Sisters, we know not of what spirit we are. When we fancy we could run with the horsemen, it were well to remember that we have not always been able to run with the footmen; and when we fancy such-and-such a friend behaved ill in deep affliction, it were well if we remembered ourselves often, lest we also should repine, for discontent may be one of the sins lurking in our soul.

Moreover, idolatry is a sin that is often found there. You do not know that you idolize your child, and you will never know it until that child dies—but then you will find it out. You do not know that you idolize your substance; but if it were gone, or you had to give it up, and were ready, like Job's wife to say, "Curse God and die," you would then discover that it was your golden calf. Idolatry has been the sin of all ages and all times. Those dear children of God, whose hearts should tell of Jehovah, and Jehovah alone, have need to keep careful watch lest at the same time they indulge self-confidence which is only another form of idolatry—the worship of ourselves instead of God. Let us beware lest we indulge in self-satisfaction, and think that our righteousness is something satisfactory after all. It is a blessed thing to find idolatry out, but it will hide itself if it can.

It is well to consider the question, "How is it these things hide themselves in us? Other people find them out—how is it we cannot find them?" It is certain that you can detect other men's faults, but you cannot detect your own. The lookers-on often see more than the players, and we sometimes perceive more at a distance than when we approach nearer. The fact is that partiality to ourselves blinds us to our own imperfections, and makes us see the mote in our brother's eye though there is a beam in our own. In many cases this ignorance arises from lack of searching; it is not pleasant work to seek out faults—"take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines." It is not easy work; we do not like finding out sin. Too many of us are lazy about religion; we do the work of God deceitfully, we do not search our hearts with candles and try ourselves as with crucibles, as in a furnace—we are not purified seven times over, and so sin escapes for want of a hearty search to find it out. Besides, sin is so subtle it changes its shape. If Satan cannot shoot us

from above, he will do it from below; if he cannot assail us in the head, he will seek to cast us down by tripping us with the foot. Sins of every shape, form, and hue come upon us, and the great probability is that in trying to kill one sin, we shall fall into another. Often in aiming to attain to a virtue we have overshot the mark, and gone into a vice. We have wanted to honor God, and humble ourselves, and then we have grown mean in spirit. We wanted to be noble and bold, and have grown intimidating. We wanted to be loving, and we grew to be falsely charitable, tolerating sin. We wanted to be stern against sin, and have grown bitter against friends who have fallen into it. We mistake the narrow road, and break the hedge either on the right hand or on the left.

It is the subtlety of sin that makes it so hard for us to find it out. Besides, Beloved, we have fallen into the bad habit of comparing and contrasting ourselves with others. We are constantly indulging in the supposition, "Oh, well, I am better than some." We look at our fellow Christians and see their inconsistencies, and say, "Well, I do not do *that*." The Pharisaic prayer is very common, even among Christians, I am afraid, "Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men." The preacher himself, though he might preach humility to you, sometimes gets to comparing himself with other preachers, and his hearers, he doubts not, do the same. "Oh," you think, "I am more quick in God's work, more earnest than some Christians; I wish they would wake up, too," but, while we are censuring them, we are really laying a flattering unction to our own souls by supposing we are so much better, and that we have cut off so much of our own sins. Oh, Beloved, take heed of comparing yourselves with others, for this is not wise. Come to Christ and look at Him, and then your faults will be apparent. View His Perfection, and in the light of that your own infirmities will soon be discovered. But if you look at your Brother's righteousness, which is but little better than yours, and perhaps not as good, you will be apt to get proud and lifted up—and so fall into sin.

I shall not, however, enlarge upon this point. There are, no doubt, in all of us Canaanites still dwelling in the land, that will be thorns in our side.

II. Now, secondly, A SINGULAR MEANS FOR THEIR DESTRUCTION—"YOUR GOD WILL SEND THE HORNET AMONG THEM."

These fellows resorted to caves and dens. God employed the very best means for their destruction. I suppose these hornets were large wasps; two or three times, perhaps, as large as a wasp, with very terrible stings. It is not an unusual historical fact to find districts depopulated by means of stinging insects. In connection with the journey of Dr. Livingstone, we can never forget that strange kind of guest which is such a pest to the cattle in any district that the moment it appeared they had either to fly before it or to die. The hornet must have been a very terrible creature; but it is not at all extraordinary that there should have been hornets capable of driving out a nation. The hornet was a very simple means, it was no sound of trumpet, nor even the glitter of miracles; it was a simple, natural means of fetching these people out of their holes. It is well known that insects in some countries will sting one race of people

and not another. Sometimes the inhabitants of a country are not at all careful about mosquitoes, or such creatures, when strangers are greatly pestered with them. God could therefore bring hornets which would sting the Hivites and Jebusites but not molest the Israelites, and in this way the Canaanites were driven out of their holes—some died by the stings of hornets, and others were put in the way of the sharp swords of the men of Israel, and thus they died.

The spiritual analogy to this is, the daily trouble which God sends to every one of us. I suppose you have all got your hornets. Some have hornets in the family; your child may be a hornet to you—your wife, your husband, your brother, the dearest friend you have, may be a daily cross to you; and, though a dead cross is very heavy, a living cross is heavier by far. To bury a child is a great grief, but to have that child live and sin against you is ten times worse. You may have hornets that shall follow you to your bedchamber—some of you may know what that means—so that even where you ought to find your rest and your sweetest solace, it is there that you receive your bitterest stings of trouble. The hornet will sometimes come in the shape of business. You are perplexed—you cannot prosper—one thing comes after another. You seem to be born to trouble more than other people. You have ventured on the right hand, but it was a failure; you pushed out on the left, but that was a breakdown. Almost everybody you trust fails immediately, and those you do not trust are the people you might have safely relied upon. You seem to be infested with those hornets in your business to make everything go ill with you; you have perplexity upon perplexity—nothing so serious as to be your ruin, but a deal of fretful trouble which keeps you uneasy. Others have hornets in their bodies. Some have constant headaches—aches and pains pass and shoot along the nerves of others. If you could but be rid of it, you think, how happy you would be; but you have got your hornet and that hornet is always with you.

If I tried to get through the whole list of hornets, I would need all the morning, for there is a particular grief to every man. Each man has his own form of obnoxious sting which he has to feel. You will come running to your friend sometimes, and say, "Oh, I have such trouble! So-and-So has been saying such-and-such a thing of me; if I had not so many bad neighbors I should get on. This is the worst trouble a man could have." You do not know, you do not know. The heart knows its own bitterness. There is a skeleton in every house; every man has a shoe that pinches more or less; and there is not a Christian on earth who has not a hornet.

But what are they for? They are sent with the same objective with which God sent hornets into Canaan, namely, to drive out the Canaanites; and I shall have to show you that they do so. Your hornets drive you to prayer. Just put in the word *hornet* into the verse we have been singing—

"Hornets make the promise sweet,
Hornets give new life to prayer,
Hornets bring me to His feet,
Lay me low and keep me there,"

and you have got the drift of what these daily hornets do. You would not pray if you had not trouble; I am afraid you would grow lax, cold,

indifferent; but these sting you, and you say, "I must go to my God for comfort under this pest, this nuisance." Why, what a blessing that is for you to be stung to your Father's feet—blessed sting that brings you there! You would not value the promises half as much if it were not for the hornets; but you turn to some precious Word of God that just suits your case, and you say, "I never saw such sweetness in that as I do now. Blessed be God for sending a passage so suitable to my condition." The hornets take you to the promise, and seem to point you to the place where the milk and honey flow.

And how they also tend to lay you at His feet after you have been hasty in temper. After you have felt how proud you must have been, all because of the hornet that brought the pride out, you have gone to God and said, "Lord, I did not think I was such a fool; I should not have believed it. If anyone had said to me yesterday, 'You would do so-and-so,' I would have said, 'Is your servant a dog, that I should do such a thing?' But this has so troubled me, bit me in a sore place, irritated me, that I could not bear it that I have done what I would not have done for all the world." That just shows what there was there before. You see, if sin had not been in you, it could not have come out. All the trouble in the world does not put sin in the Christian, but it brings it out. And just as disease is all the better when it is fetched out to the surface, that so its power in the interior may be destroyed, so is it a blessing—a painful blessing—when the hornet comes and makes us see the evil that otherwise would have lain hidden in us. You know, my dear Friends, practically, I dare say what I mean. The other day you were in such a heavenly frame of mind—you had had half an hour alone, or had just come home from Tabernacle and enjoyed the service, and something patted you on the back and said, "How you are grown in Divine Grace!" You did not say it in words, but you did *think*, "Well, I am getting on; there is something good in me after all." When you got home, perhaps the meat was badly cooked, or there was something done the very opposite to what you had wished, and it seemed to be done on purpose to irritate you. You thought so, and without a moment's consideration you said some very strong words—very strong, indeed. Then something came and touched you on the other shoulder and said, "Ah, is this growing in Divine Grace?" And you felt very humbled, taken down a great many notches; and when you went upstairs to bed, if you had gone up there without that hornet, your prayer would have been a Pharisee's prayer, and as it was, when you got there, all you could say was, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The hornet had done you a world of good! It might have fetched out a little bad temper, but for all that it had fetched out your pride and self-conceit.

The daily troubles we have are meant to drive us to God, to drive us to the promise, and also to show us where our weak points are in order that we may contend with all our might against them. I believe, my dear Friends, that the hardest-hearted, most cross-grained, and most unlovely Christians in all the world are those who have never had much trouble, and those who are the most sympathizing, loving, and Christ-like, are generally those who have the most affliction. The worst thing that can

happen to any of us is to have our path made too smooth, and one of the greatest blessings that ever the Lord gave us was a *cross*. "I would never have been able to see," said one, "if I had not been blind." And said another, "I would never have been able to run the race set before me if I had not broken my leg." Our infirmities are channels of blessing; our difficulties, trials, vexations, and perplexities are most sweet and blessed means of Grace to our souls. I think we ought to be very thankful to God for the hornet. Says one, "I am not." "No trial for the present seems to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." When you are in a sane mind, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and God the Holy Spirit really teaches you to be wise, you will go and thank God for hornets. "Lord, I bless You that You have not left me unchastised. I praise You for the cares and troubles which are so unpleasant to my flesh, by which that flesh is mortified. I thank You, Father." You never hear a child say this, but if it were a wise child it would. "I thank You, my Father, for the rod. I thank You, O my God, that You have not let me have my own will, that You have blighted my prospects, crossed my hopes, marred my plans, cast down my expectations, taken away my joys. I thank You, O You Great Liberator, for having broken the golden bars of my cage to give my spirit liberty, and for having snapped the bonds of my captivity which bound me to the earth, that I might be able to mount upwards to Yourself." Whenever you are singing God's praise, say, "He sent us hornets, for His mercy endures forever: let Him be blessed evermore."

There is one point I want you to notice in the text; it would be guilt on my part to pass it without observation; and that is, we are expressly told the hornets came from God. He sent them. "The Lord your God will send the hornet." This will help you perhaps to bear their stings another time. God weighs your troubles in scales, and measures out your afflictions, every drachma and scruple of them; and since they come, therefore, directly from a loving Father's hands, accept them with grateful cheerfulness, and pray that the result which Divine Wisdom has ordained to flow from them may be abundantly realized in your sanctification—in being made like Christ.

III. And now I have to close by observing that we have here A VERY SUGGESTIVE LESSON TO OURSELVES, a lesson which we have already anticipated, but let us repeat it. It is this. What is my particular besetting sin? Have I been careful in self-examination? Have I issued a constant search warrant against the subtle forms of evil? If not, I must expect to have the hornet. God never punishes His children for sin penally, but He chastens them for it paternally. You may often discover what your sin is by the punishment, for you can see the face of the sin in the punishment—the one is so like the other. Dear Friend, what is your particular trouble today; what hornet stings you? Go to God with Job's request, "Show me why You contend with me." If the consolations of God are small with you, it is because there is some secret sin in you. Look at the trouble you have today, and see if you cannot discover the sin. A disobedient child—is it possible that you also are living in some act of disobedience to your heavenly Father? Is it a servant who annoys you? Is

it possible that you also are an ill servant of the King, idle and indifferent to His command? Is it a loss in business? May it not be possible that you are not attending to God's business, and therefore His Church is a loser, and therefore He makes you a loser in your own business? Is it sickness in the flesh? May there not be some spiritual sickness there which is necessary to keep in check and to subdue? Has someone treated you haughtily? May you not also be haughty? Has another slandered you, and are you smarting under it? Have you ever spoken against the children of God? May you not have an itching tongue, too, and God is making you feel the smart of it so that you may mind how you remove the bridle from the unruly tongue? Has someone undervalued your labor, and spoken depreciatingly of your motives? May you not also have had hard thoughts concerning some of your Brothers and Sisters in Christian labors? Do you feel, just now, under great depression of spirit? Is it not possible that you have neglected to enter into fellowship with Christ in His suffering, and therefore He is bringing you down into it by force? I know not how it may be with you, Beloved, but this I know, I have not searched my own soul as I would desire to do in the future. I would wish to find out everything that is within me that is evil, that it may be dragged forth and executed at once.

It is stern work. It is work that never could be done if it were not for that precious assurance that God is with us. God, the mighty God of Jacob, will have us to be His people. He has prepared a Heaven for a perfect people, and He will make us perfect that He may neither lose us, nor the place He has prepared for us. He has sworn by Himself He will never leave you. He will, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, drive out your lusts and corruptions till you shall be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect. Come, then, you men of war, take to your harness, and buckle on your armor, and nerve your souls for combat. "You have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin." "Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be weary" in yourselves, and from now on and forever fight the good fight for the crown that fades not away.

I have been speaking to saved ones, and to saved ones, only. But you who are unsaved will have the hornets, too. Only those hornets will be of no use to you. They will sting you away from God, rather than to Him. Your troubles will only make you dislike and hate the Most High the more. Oh that His Grace would visit you, and change your heart! And then, perhaps, your trials might be sanctified to fetch you to your Father's face. May it be so, and His shall be the Glory evermore. Amen.

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THE MIGHTY ARM
NO. 674

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 4, 1866, *BY C. H. SPURGEON,* AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"You have a mighty arm: strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand." Psalm 89:13.

WE are, during the coming week, humbly but earnestly to beseech of God for days of refreshing and seasons of revival. It is well for us at the outset to distinctly remind ourselves of the source from where all the strength must come. No genuine revival can ever arise from the flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Human excitement at the utmost, and carnal zeal at its extremity, can do nothing towards the real conversion of souls. Here we are taught the lesson, "not by might nor by power." Disappointments ought to have taught the Church of God this lesson long ago. The many revivals which she has had which have proved to be spurious—the puffing up of excitement and not the building up of Divine Grace, all these should have driven her out of the last relic of her self-confidence, and have made her feel that it is not of herself to do anything in the Lord's cause without His help. "Our help comes from the Lord who made Heaven and earth." It is well to be constantly convinced of this. We must have God's arm laid to the work or else nothing will be accomplished which will stand the solemn tests of the Last Great Day.

Wood, hay, and stubble *we* may build alone, but gold, silver, and precious stones are from the King's treasury. "Without Me you can do nothing," was the Savior's word to His chosen Apostles; how much more applicable must it be to us who are "less than the least of all saints." In vain your holy assemblies, in vain your earnest desires, in vain your passionate addresses, in vain your efforts of a thousand shapes—unless God Himself shall step forth from the hiding place of His Power, and set Himself a second time to His own glorious work, no good can come of all your toils. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it."

Having reminded ourselves, dear Friends, that our great strength lies in the God of Jacob, it is very comforting to notice how great this strength is. There is but one arm for us to rest upon, but blessed is the assurance—"You have a mighty arm." Oh, if that God upon whom we have entirely to depend were stinted in might, and had a limit put to His strength, we might despair. If the answer to the question, "Is the Lord's arm waxed short?" were the doleful reply, "Yes, He is no longer mighty to save," then we might give up the work; but stupendous strength is with the Most High, the treasury from which we draw is inexhaustible; we may come to God with the cheering confidence that we cannot possibly ask what it is not in His power to perform. We have the mighty God of

Jacob to be our arm every morning and our salvation every night. I desire to speak of our God as the Almighty Lord that you and I may be strengthened in the work in which we are engaged for His name's sake.

In speaking upon the Divine Power, I shall have a few words this morning upon *the Power itself;* then a few words upon *its manifestations;* and then I will close up with *the lessons to be derived from the Power and its developments.*

I. First, then, some few words about the POWER OF GOD itself, having as my drift the stirring up of Believers' minds to ask and to expect a great display of it.

In the first place, *God's Power is like Himself, self-existent and self-sustained.* Power in the creature is like water in the cistern; power in the Creator is like water in the fountain. The creature is the moon which shines with reflected light; the Creator is the Sun whose light is not derived, springing from within Himself. Naturally and spiritually this statement holds good. All the power that you and I have to serve God with must first come from Him, but He derives no power whatever from us. All our fresh springs are in God, but the rivers of our grace do not minister to His fullness. "My goodness extends not to you." The mightiest of men add not so much as a shadow of increased power to the Omnipotent One. His scepter is established by its own Omnipotence. He sits on no buttressed throne, and leans on no assisting arm. His courts are not maintained by His courtiers, nor do they borrow their splendor of power from His creatures. He is Himself the great central Source and Originator of all power. We must come, then, to His footstool, feeling that all must come from Him. We must bring nothing but our weakness, nothing but our sense of need, and come to Him crying, "O God, You are in Yourself all-sufficient. You do not need us, nor can we contribute anything to You. Now let Your ability flow into us, and gird each of us poor weaklings with Your might!"

In the next place, God's Power is *comprehensive*, including within itself all the power which resides in all the creatures in the universe. "God has spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God." When the wheels of a machine revolve, there is power in every cog, but all that power originally was in the engine which sets the whole in action, and in a certain sense is still there; but in a far higher sense all power dwells in the Lord, "for in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Whatever power there may be in the mightiest of God's creatures is still inherent in God Himself. So, my Brothers and Sisters, if the Lord shall be pleased to teach some of you how to pray, and others how to exhort; if He should gird you with might and send you into the midst of this Church to work spiritual miracles for Him, the power will still be His, to be in an instant withdrawn if it so pleases Him; and especially withdrawn if you begin to sacrifice unto your own self and say, "My own arm has gotten me this victory." All power dwells perpetually and necessarily in the Lord Jehovah. The might which resides in any spiritual agency at this present moment, whether it is in the Book of God or in the ministry of truth, or

in prayer, or in what else the Church serves the Lord—all that power is still comprehended in the Most High. Come then, Beloved, let us all draw near to Him, and pray that as all fullness is in Himself, He would be pleased to give it to us; and since giving it does not impoverish, but the same strength remains in Him still, let us be bold to make great drafts upon the Divine storehouse.

The Power of God, I would remind you in the third place, is *immutable*. Whatever He did of old He is able to repeat now. His arm never did increase in strength; what more could He be than Almighty? It never did decrease*;* what else can we conceive Him to be than God All-Sufficient? We talk of changing ages, but we must not dream of a changing God! There was the age of gold, the age of silver, and we mournfully say that we have fallen upon the age of iron—but the God of all ages—like the finest gold, abides ever more most pure and glorious! Our God is not the God of the past only, but of the present. Think not of Him as did the Syrians, that Jehovah is God of the hills, and not the God of the valleys. The era of great men had no other God than He who watches over their humble sons. He is the God of us upon whom the ends of the earth have come; there is no change in the Power of the Everlasting Father; time and age work no decay in Him. His eyes have not waxed dim, neither has His natural force abated; He is still the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God! Let this encourage us, then, in our earnest entreaties that He would do for us like wonders to those which He worked for the early Church. Let us plead for Pentecosts, for even mightier works than Apostles saw. "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." Open your mouths according to the model of the olden times, and sing unto the Lord's arm in your hearts as you sang with your lips just now—

"Again your wonted prowess show,
Be You made bare again!"

It is for us to recollect also that God's Power is in the fullness of it perfectly *irresistible*. We grant that when God puts out but little of His strength, it is with Him as it is with a man when he plays with a child; he may allow that child to overcome him. But when God puts forth His Omnipotence, who, who is there that can stay His hand? Proud hearts are humbled, hard hearts are broken, iron melts, and rock dissolves when the Lord visits the host—none of the men of might can find their hands. At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the horses and the chariots are cast into a dead sleep. Let this encourage us—we have only to bestir our God and all things are possible. If we shall but behold His goings forth in the sanctuary, there is nothing that by any possibility can thwart the desire of our soul or frustrate our wishes. Only plead with the Most High till you can cry with Luther, "Vici!" and we have overcome, we have conquered in prayer, and conquered altogether. Let your cry be heard in the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth—"Awake! Put on Your strength, O God! And go forth with our hosts to conflict for the glory of Your name," and if He deigns to answer, nothing can withstand Him. This thought ought to comfort those of us who feel our weakness, and think that we can do

nothing—remember *His* strength, and remember that He can do everything. If you have any kinsfolk for whom you have prayed and no answer has come, and your own exertions have been mocked at and despised, come again to the Mighty God of Jacob, for He will do His good pleasure, and in answer to your prayers He will send forth the blessing! His Power is Irresistible; lay hold upon it and prevail.

Nor will it be ill for me to remind you that this Power of God is entirely *independent*. I mean that it needs nothing extraneous or beyond itself to enable it to work. This Power is independent of place. Do you think there was any sanctity in the upper room at Jerusalem? Behold this room is quite as sacred as that filled by the Spirit in years gone by. Dream not that the city of Jerusalem of old, in the days of the Savior, was a more proper theater for Divine works than this is; He can make London rejoice even as He did Jerusalem of old! Equally is the Divine Power independent of time. Do not dream that the ages have changed so that in this day God cannot do His mighty works. Beloved, if you can conceive of an age that is worse than another, so much the more is it a fit platform for the heavenly energy; the more difficulty, the more room for Omnipotence to show itself. There is elbow room for the great God when there is some great thing in the way, and some great difficulty that He may overturn. When there is a mountain to be cast into the valley, then there is almighty work to be done, and our Covenant God only needs to see work to do for His praying people, and He will shortly do it. God is not dependent upon instruments any more than upon times and places. He who blessed the world by Paul and Peter can do His good pleasure by His servants now. The Christ of the fishermen is our Christ, too. Talk not of Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingli as though they were especially powerful in themselves, and therefore accomplished so marvelous a work. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, there are humble men and women among us whom God may just as well bless as those three mighties if it so pleases Him; dream not that there was something about the Wesleys and Whitefield which made them the only instruments for evangelizing this nation! O God Almighty, You can bless even us! And among the thousands of ministers who up to now may have plowed as upon a rock, and labored in vain, there is no one whom God may not take and make him as a two-edged sword in His hand to smite through the hearts of His foes. Beloved, I have sometimes prayed, and do often pray that out of that little band of men whom we have in our own College—some 90 or so—He would find for Himself His arrows and fit them to the bow, and shoot them to the utmost ends of the earth. And why not? Unbelief has many mournful reasons, but faith sees none! In our classes there are women, there are men, there are children, upon whom the Lord may pour forth His Spirit so that once again our sons and our daughters shall prophesy, and our young men shall see visions, and our old men shall dream dreams. We have but to wait upon the Most High, and He will honor us with success; for He can work in any place, in any time, among any

people, and by any instruments. Let us come with confidence to His feet, and expect to see Him lay bare His mighty arms.

This Power, I must not forget to say, as a gathering up of the whole, is *infinite*. Power in the creature must have a limit for the creature itself is finite, but Power in the Creator has neither measure nor bound. I am sure, Beloved, we treat our God often as though He were like ourselves; we sit down after some defeat or disappointment, and we say we will never try again—we suppose the work allotted to us to be impossible. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Why limit the Holy One of Israel? God is not man that He should fail, nor the son of man that He should suffer defeat; behold He touches the hills and they tremble; He touches the mountains and they smoke. When He goes forth before His people, He makes the mountains to skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs, what, then, can block up His path? You divided of old the Red Sea, O God, and You did break the dragon's head in the midst of the many waters, and You can still do according to Your will, let any hinder who may. Oh, Beloved, if I may but be privileged to lift up your hearts and mine to something like a due comprehension of the Infinite Power of God, we shall then have come to the threshold of a great blessing. If you believe in the littleness of God you will ask but little and you will have but little; but enlarge your desires, let your souls be stretched till they become wide as seven heavens, and even then you shall not hold the whole of the great God, but you shall be fitted to receive more largely out of His fullness. Ask of Him that He would give the heathen unto Christ for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession; that the scepter of Jehovah shall go forth, and the monarchy of Christ shall be extended from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.

It were not right, perhaps, to leave this point without observing concerning this Divine Power that it is *all our own,* for we are told that this God is our God forever and ever. "The Lord is my portion, said my soul, therefore will I hope in Him." Christian, the potency which dwells in Jehovah belongs to you! It is yours to rest upon in holy trust, and yours to stir up in earnest pleading. That little sinew moves the great arm—I mean the sinew of the Believer's prayer. If you can pray, God will work. "To him who believe all things are possible." It is not, "Can You work, O God?" But it is, "Can you believe, O Christian?" You have a mighty arm, O God, but that arm is Your people's arm, for it is written, "He is their arm every morning, and their salvation every night." Come, then, with confidence, you who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice, for this God is our God forever and ever, and He *will* help us. Yes, *He will help us,* and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him!

II. Having given utterance to these few words upon His Power in itself, I shall direct your attention to THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THIS POWER, which are very varied in character and altogether innumerable in multitude.

Following the leading of the Psalm rather than the natural order of things, I will remind you of *God's tremendous Power in destruction.* You have this in the Psalm. "You have broken Rahab in pieces as one who is slain. You have scattered Your enemies with Your strong hand." Look back with solemn awe upon the works of God in the overthrow of sin. See the whole earth deluged with destructive floods. "You have a mighty arm, O God." You have unloosed the gates that shut in the sea. Greater than Samson You have borne away both posts and bar and all, and set free the hosts of waters that they might overthrow Your foes. Up from their cavernous prison house the furious waters leap to desolate the sin-polluted world. Noah might have sung as he floated on that shoreless sea, "You have a mighty arm." Cast your eyes yonder to the East, to the well-watered plain of Sodom, and mark how God's anger smokes. He comes down to see if it is altogether according to the cry thereof, and when Justice has proved her point, then Judgment follows with swift feet. He rains Hell's torments out of Heaven upon sinners—fiery hail and brimstone cover the cities of the plain, and the smoke goes up to Heaven. "You have a mighty arm." Let your eyes glance along the banks of the Nile where haughty Pharaoh vaunts himself against the Most High. Remember how He smote the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all their strength! Let the terrible overthrow of the Red Sea never be forgotten. See how He scattered Amalek as chaff before the wind. Mark how He drove out the Hivites and the Jebusites, and gave their necks to the feet of His children who were His avengers. Talk to one another, and tell how He smote Philistia, how He made the sons of David cast forth their shoes upon Edom, and gave Moab to be the wash pot of their feet. Let the name of Sennacherib come up before you and think how the Lord thrust a bit into his mouth, and a hook into his jaws, and made him go back the way by which he came. Remember Babylon and the heaps thereof; Nineveh, and the owls and the dragons that haunt her ruined walls. Remember the proud cities of Greece, cast down and destroyed because they worshipped idols! And Rome, herself, only living like a widow in her weeds, weeping because God has bereaved her of her glory. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He has made in the earth. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder, He burns the chariots in the fire." Who is a God in might to be compared unto Him?

As we survey the works of His Power in destruction, let the subject make us grateful. What a marvel that He has not struck *us!* My Soul, remember when you did defy Him; when you did scorn His Grace, break His Sabbaths, and blaspheme His name? Yet He who breaks the ships of Tarshish by His strong east wind has not shipwrecked you, but on the sea of life you sail securely still. O Sinner! Remember that this long-suffering will not last forever. Beware, lest He tears you in pieces, and there are none to deliver you! He is strong to destroy, and condemned souls feel that He is so. If I could catch the distant sounds that rise from Hell, I think they might be rendered into this one line—"You have a mighty arm!" Oh, how He destroys! Imagination fails to picture the terror

of His blows. The day of mercy is over with the condemned, and they writhe in extreme agonies, while with almighty hands, armed with an iron rod, He smites, and smites, and smites again. "You have a mighty arm." Oh, bow before Him, you who have not loved Him; tremble at Him. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry; and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." You cannot face it out with Him—neither can you escape Him. You cannot set yourselves in battle array against the Almighty. Let the thorns set themselves in battle against the fire, but do not you attempt to stand against Him—

"O sinners, seek His face
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the scepter of His Grace,
And find salvation there."

Looking at this part of the subject, here is a very strong argument for the people of God to stir them up to pray. The fearful nature of the sinner's doom should awaken us to vehement and abiding earnestness. Must we not plead with God when we think of our fellow creatures who are liable to prove the terror of the Almighty's arm? Will you not cry, you who have hearts not altogether turned to stone? Will you not plead with all your hearts, you who have any loving tenderness and generous pity within you? Will you not cry aloud and spare not, that He would be pleased to give men right reason to see their danger, and turn them to Himself, that they may be washed in the Savior's blood, and escape the terrible wrath due their iniquities?

Turning from the subject, the Psalm reminds us of the manifestation of *God's Power in creation.* "The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours: as for the world and the fullness thereof, You have founded them. The north and the south You have created them." Now, Beloved, it is well to remember the mighty Power of God in Creation. Man needs something to work upon—give him material, and with cunning instruments he straightway makes for himself a vessel; but God began with nothing; and by His Word alone out of nothing made all things. He used no instrument except His own Word; "He spoke, and it was done as He commanded, and it stood fast." Darkness and chaos lay in the way before Him, but these soon gave place to the excellence of His might when He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." "In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of them." He garnished the heavens with the crooked serpent and the bear, and led forth Arcturus with his sons. How rapid was that work, and yet how perfect—how gloriously complete! Well might "the morning stars sing together, and the sons of God shout for joy"! Now, Christian, I want you to draw living water out of this well. The God who in the old Creation did all this, can He not work today? What if in the human heart there is nothing to help Him, He made the world out of nothing, can He not make new creatures without the aid of human will? Even out of these stones, can He not raise up children unto Abraham? His Word fashioned the Creation of old, and His Word can still work marvels. Spoken by whomever He pleases to

send, His Word shall be as potent now as in primeval days. There may be darkness and confusion in the sinner's soul; a Word shall remove all, and swift and quick, requiring not even six days.

God can make new creatures in this House of Prayer and throughout this city. The Lord has but to will it with His Omnipotent Will, and the sinner becomes a saint, and the most rebellious cast down their weapons. Oh let Creation encourage you to expect a new Creation! The old Creation had no blood upon it to plead with God to work, but we have the blood of Jesus to be our plea when we come before Him with regard to the new Creation. We may cry, "O God, since You have given Your dear Son to lay the foundations of this new earth, and these new heavens, wherein righteousness does dwell, come and build up Your Church, and complete the last and noblest work of Your hands."

Again, God's Power is manifest, dear Friends, to our joy in works of *sustentation* as well as of Creation. The next stanza of the Psalm seems to hint at that—"Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Your name." That is to say, when the showers come dropping upon Tabor and Hermon, they send forth the perfume of their flowers and produce the abundance for the flocks. Now, Beloved, God's Power has been seen, I am sure, not only in holding up the world, but in preserving His Church in the world all these years. He would be thought to be a mighty man who held up the monument of London on the palm of his hand; but You bear up, O God, the pillars of the heavens! And he who should take up St. Paul's and turn it uppermost as though it were but a cup in his hand would be exceeding mighty; but You take up the isles as a very little thing. What must be the Power of God in sustaining and supporting all worlds? But as I have said, the spiritual power which preserves the spark of the Truth of God in the midst of a sea of error is equally great; to keep His sheep alive in the midst of wolves is equally marvelous. The mighty arm of God has been conspicuous in supporting His Church in years gone by. How the Lord has been in that gallant vessel! Never a boat more tempest-tossed than she! No voyage more dangerous than hers! She has tracked a narrow channel between threatening rocks and hidden quicksand; as for her crew, they have been a feeble folk, little able to cope with boisterous elements and furious tempests. Often the good vessel of the Church has mounted up to Heaven upon the crown of an outrageous billow, and then has gone down again into the depths of a yawning sea while her sailors have reeled like drunken men, staggering to and fro, being at their wits' end; but they have cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He who was strong to stir up the deep from its very bottom and make it boil like a pot, has been equally strong to speak the Word and still the raving of its waves. Let us be, then, of good comfort. Why should not God bless and succor His well-beloved Church now? Why should He not make her in these peaceful days to be a Palace Beautiful for Himself to dwell in? For the fair edification of His Church new converts are needed. There can be no building up of her walls except by the quarrying of fresh stones. O God, we have confidence in You, that You will help us! Strong is Your

hand, You have a mighty arm! Oh come, for the sustaining and increase of Your Church, even in this, our day!

But, Beloved, the most striking manifestation of Divine Power is found in the fourth form of it, namely, in works of *Redemption*. Typical of these was the great redeeming work at the Red Sea, and hence the song of Moses is joined with the song of the Lamb; for it was by Moses' rod that God brought forth the hosts of His beloved, and in mightier fashion and to a nobler tune shall the Elect sing when they have been redeemed from all their enemies. Think, dear Friends, of the mighty arm of God in working out the means of our salvation. That was no light labor which Jesus undertook. Hercules cleaned the Augean stable, said the fable, but what an Augean stable is this world! Yet Christ will purge it; He is purging it, He did purge it by His death. This Aceldama shall yet become an Elysium; the field of blood shall be transformed into a garden of delights. Christ came to bear a load upon His shoulders compared with which the burden of Atlas is as nothing. Atlas, according to the heathen mythology, bore the world between his shoulders, but Jesus bears the world's *sin*, and that is more. Can you see Him there in the Garden? Great drops of sweat prove what a tremendous toil He has undertaken. Do you see Him on the Cross? Not a bone is broken, but every bone is dislocated to prove how great the labor, but how greater still the strength which achieved the whole. O Lord Jesus! When we see that You have burst the gates of death, that You have trod on the neck of sin, that You have broken the head of Satan, that You have led captivity captive, and opened the gates of Heaven to all Your people, we may indeed, sing—

"You have a mighty arm."

Just now we have most to do with *the application of this Redemption by the Spirit of God,* for it concerns that for which we pray. We have no reason to ask our Lord Jesus to finish the work of Redemption, for He *has* completed it—on the Cross He said, "It is finished." It is the application of it which concerns our souls. And, Beloved in the faith, it is a great joy to us to know that in bringing souls to Christ by the Holy Spirit, the Omnipotence of God is very graciously displayed. Let us just a minute or two think of some sure tokens of this, and this shall furnish us with the third point, namely, THE LESSONS FROM THE WHOLE.

III. There have been vouchsafed in the past very wonderful manifestations of Divine Favor. Churches have grown very lukewarm, ministers very dull, Doctrines have become unsound, the hearts of God's people have failed, the faithful have almost died out; but all of a sudden God has raised up some one man, perhaps some half dozen; and the face of the Church was changed from languor to energy! These men did but strike the spark, and the flame flew over all lands. The Reformation was a marvelous type of genuine revivals, God-given revivals, which have been frequent in all times. In England we have had them, in America they have been abundant. Ireland has not been without them. In the darkest day, when everyone said the cause of religion was growing hopeless, then the great Lover of the Church has appeared. Have you

never read the story of Livingstone preaching in a heavy shower of rain, outside the village of Shotts, to the multitude of people standing there who would not stir from the hearing of the Word? Or have you not heard the story of Whitefield's mighty preaching, when the people moved to and fro, as the corn is moved by the summer wind, and at last fell down beneath the Word as the sheaves fall before the reaper's scythe? Why may we not see all this again? Why not? And why not greater things than these? What hinders but our unbelief? O God, You have a mighty arm. Tens of thousands beneath one ministry have been made to feel the power of the Cross, and why not again? Let us proclaim a crusade, let us gather together in prayer, and besiege the Throne of God, and we shall see again a revival that shall make the age glad!

God has proven the power of His arm in *the persons* whom He has saved. Saul of Tarsus seemed to be a very hard case, but the Light from Heaven, and the Voice which gently upbraided, had power over Saul, and he became one of the ablest of God's servants. There is no heart so hard but what God's hammer can dash it in pieces. Let us never despair while we can say of our God, "You have a mighty arm." Beloved, if there should happen to come within these walls, at any time, some of the worst of men, we must not think that God will not bless them. Oh no; "You have a mighty arm." Lord, here is a great and hard rock; now wield Your great hammer, and the sparks shall fly, and the flint stone shall be broken into pieces! Quarry Your own stones, O God, and make them fit for Your Temple, for, "You have a mighty arm."

This is seen, sometimes, in *the number* converted. Three thousand in one day under Peter's sermon; why not 3,000 again? Why not *30,000?* Why not 300,000 in a day? There is nothing too great for us to ask for, or for God to grant. He could, if He willed, turn the hearts of men as He turns the rivers by His foot.

His might has been manifested in *the instruments* which the Lord has employed. He has taken the base things and the despised, to make them the medium of His Power, and then we have said, "You have a mighty arm" to do such wonders by such puny things.

Now, Beloved, when I recollect the past in these various tokens of Divine Strength, I wish I had time to encourage your hearts to expect great things of God. We are certainly not straitened in Him. You will be straitened in your own heart, if you are straitened at all; and I do pray my mighty Master that He may not allow this to be, but give us large expectations, that we may have large realizations!

There is a friend here who says, "I have been praying very long to this mighty God for the conversion of one who lies very near my heart, but I cannot get an answer." No, Beloved, it may be that God has not yet put forth His Power—it is certain He has not, or your friend would be healed. There may have been a reason why the Lord would not work, namely, because you were not prepared for so great a blessing, and perhaps, had He honored you to be the means of your friend's conversion, you would have grown proud. If you now feel your own utter powerlessness, now

will be the time for God to work. The reason of delay may now have gone. Certainly the fact that God has not answered you is no reason why He should not ultimately give you your desire. If He has delayed a little time, remember He is never too late, and certainly never forgets in the end. He may delay, but He cannot deny. Has your friend become worse and worse? Well, then, rampant sin often stirs up God. It is time for You to work, Lord, for they make void Your Law! I look upon the present age with very great comfort. Beloved, there never was a time in which Popery was so, I was about to say omnipresent everywhere—it is working everywhere, openly and by stealth. The Church of England has become thoroughly putrid with Puseyism. Infidelity has grown very bold. Let all these powers of evil be developed and work their will, for good will come out of it in the end. All these provocations will arouse our God. I thought within myself, when turning over these matters and seeing the signs of a breaking out of the old moderatism in Scotland, "Ah, Lord! You have not answered Your friends, perhaps You will hear Your foes; and if Your children's prayers have not provoked You to bestir Yourself, perhaps the hard words of Your enemies will do it." It is a good thing for Zion when her enemies begin to curse and to lift up themselves against God, for then He will take up His own quarrel. Let them throw down the gauntlet, and God will take it up; and we know when He does come forth from His resting place, the victory is sure. It is for us, however, to cry unto Him, and spare not till He proves His cause to be His own by the potency which He puts into it. Let us, then, discard our despondencies and be of good courage, for strong is His hand and high is His right hand—

"Lord, when iniquities abound,
And blasphemies grow bold.
When faith is hardly to be found,
And love is waxing cold,
Is not Your chariot hastening on?
Have You not given this sign?
May we not trust and live upon
A promise so Divine?"

Beloved, I am encouraged to expect the visitation of Divine Grace among us for these reasons—*It must be for God's Glory to save souls;* there cannot be two opinions about it. Will He not therefore do it? Secondly, *It must be due to Christ that souls should be saved.* He cannot have seen the whole of the travail of His soul yet; I am sure He is not satisfied yet; He is yet to have many more! And shall He not have His seed and see His children? We can plead the blood, and that is a prevalent argument with the Most High. I look upon our prayers as tokens for good. Some of us can say we came up here with prayer, and our souls have been exercised during the week with groans and longings towards the mighty God of Jacob, that He would bless this congregation, and bless the world. This, too, is a token for good. Our past history comforts me in cheering hope. "The Lord *has* been mindful of us; He *will* bless us." Who would have thought that the Lord would bless us as He has done? It is now 12 years and more since I, a stripling, first came up

to this great city. With what trembling did I come! You were but very few and feeble, but still there was the true life lingering among you, and soon the blessing came. You remember our sore trials and troubles, when we went through fire and through water, and men did ride over our heads; but our God has brought us out into a wealthy place. This very house is, itself, a monument of what God can do.

Poor and feeble folk were we, and yet this house was built to His praise; and He has filled it, and kept it full. Where else has He been pleased to gather the multitudes year after year, with never-failing, never-flagging interest and earnestness? Where else has He been pleased to add to the Church by hundreds in the year, till the only difficulty is the time to see the inquirers, and to hear their confession of faith? In what other Church have there been 450 souls added to the fellowship in one year? Where else has the Baptismal pool been stirred with such a multitude of souls immersed into a profession of the Lord Jesus Christ? We say this not, we trust we do not, with so much as a single grain of sacrificing unto self, for what were we, and what were our father's house, that He should have brought us up to now? But we beg you to regard the past as a type of the future. Oh, start not back, you men of prayer! Fail not now since God is still your arm! You carry bows, turn not back in the day of battle! You have the trophies of past victories before your eyes! Now for a mighty attack upon the Mercy Seat, that you may win power to overcome the gates of Hell! Let us be vehement—violent I was about to say—for, "the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Let us cannonade the gate of Heaven! Let us rise up, each man and each woman, every soul that has power, and let us cry unto the mighty God that He would be pleased to give us such a blessing that we shall not have room enough to receive it! It *must* come, only be ready for it! It *will* come; it comes even now! Thank God! Take courage! Be on your watchtower! And may the Lord bless us for His name's sake. Amen.

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SPRING IN THE HEART
NO. 675

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 11, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"You bless the springing thereof."
Psalm 65:10.

THERE is something very delightful in the springtime of Nature, and though other seasons excel in fullness, spring must always bear the palm for freshness and beauty. We are accustomed to thank God when the harvest hours draw near, and the golden grain invites the sickle, but we ought equally to thank Him for the rougher and stormier days of spring, for these prepare the harvest. April showers are mothers of the sweet May flowers, and the wet and cold of winter are the parents of the splendor of summer. God blesses the springing thereof, or else it could not be said, "You crown the year with Your goodness." There is as much necessity for Divine Benediction in spring as for heavenly bounty in summer, and therefore we should praise God all the year round. As the God of seasons, Jehovah deserves our thanksgiving.

This month happens to be springtime with our Church. We see youthful piety developed, and on every hand we hear the joyful cry of those who say, "We have found the Lord." Our sons are springing up as the grass and as willows by the watercourses, till as a Church we are ready to hold up our hands in glad astonishment and cry, "Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows?" This is a happy springtime with us. There may come seasons of a more luxurious autumn, when the Church shall grow riper in knowledge and gifts and graces, but certainly in the young days of the Church, when God is blessing her with so many conversions, she has great cause to rejoice. We have just begun a series of revival meetings, and this text seemed to me to be the most appropriate as I heard of conversions already given to us. "You bless the springing thereof," You do not make us tarry, O God, for Your blessing for months and years, but even at the very commencement, as soon as Zion travails, she brings forth children; as soon as the desire goes up to Heaven the answer comes down, and while we are crying, God is blessing.

However, I intend to take the text this morning in reference to individual cases. There is a time of springing of piety, when it is just in

its bud, just breaking through the dull cold earth of unregeneracy. I desire to talk a little about that, and concerning the blessing which the Lord grants to the green blade of new-born godliness, to those who are in the early dawn, beginning to seek and to feel after God, if haply they may find Him.

I. First, I shall have a little to say about THE WORK PREVIOUS TO THE SPRINGING THEREOF.

It appears from the text that there is work for God alone to do before the springing comes, and we know that there is work for God to do through us as well. Beloved Friends, before there can be springing in the soul of any, there must be plowing, harrowing, and sowing. There must be a *plowing,* and we do not expect that as soon as ever we plow we shall reap the sheaves. Blessed be God, in many cases the reaper overtakes the plowman, but we must not always expect it. In some hearts God is long in preparing the soul by conviction. The Law with its ten black horses drags the plowshare of conviction up and down the soul till there is not one part of it left unfurrowed; and, deeper than any plow can go, Conviction goes to the very core and center of the spirit till the spirit is wounded. The plowers make deep furrows indeed when God puts His hand to the plow; the soil of the heart is broken in pieces in the Presence of the Most High.

Then comes the *sowing*. Before there can be springing up it is certain that there must be something put in; so that after the preacher has used the plow of the Law, he then applies to his Master for the seed basket of the Gospel. Gospel promises, Gospel Doctrines, especially a clear exposition of Free Grace and the Atonement, these are the handfuls of corn which we try to scatter broadcast. Some of the handfuls of corn fall on the highway, and are lost; but other handfuls fall where the plow has been, and there they abide.

Then comes the *harrowing* work. We do not expect to sow seed and then leave it—the Gospel has to be prayed over. The prayer of the preacher and the prayer of the Church make up God's harrow to rake in the seed after it is scattered, and so it is covered up within the clods of the soul, and is hidden in the heart of the hearer.

Now there is a reason why I dwell upon this, namely, that I may exhort my dear Brothers who have not seen success to not give up the work, but to hope that they have been doing the plowing, and sowing, and harrowing work, and that the harvest is to come. I mention this for yet another reason, and that is by way of warning to those who expect to have a harvest without this preparatory work. I do not believe that much good will come from attempts at sudden revivals made without previous

prayerful labor. A revival to be permanent must be a matter of growth, and the result of much holy effort, longing, pleading, and watching. The servant of God is to preach the Gospel whether men are prepared for it or not; but in order to success, depend upon it there is a preparedness necessary among the hearers. Upon some hearts, warm earnest preaching drops like an unusual thing which startles but does not convict, and in other congregations, where good Gospel preaching has long been the rule, and much prayer has been offered, the words fall into the hearers' souls and bring forth speedy fruit. We must not expect to have results without work. There is no hope of a Church having an extensive revival in its midst unless there is continued and importunate waiting upon God together with earnest laboring, intense anxiety, and hopeful expectation. But there is also a work to be done which is beyond our power. After plowing, sowing, and harrowing, there must come the shower from Heaven. "You water it," says the Psalmist. In vain are all our efforts unless God shall bless us with the rain of His Holy Spirit's influence. O Holy Spirit! You, and You alone work wonders in the human heart, and You come from the Father and the Son to do the Father's purposes, and to give the Son to see the travail of His Soul.

There are three effects spoken of in the lines preceding my text. First, we are told *He waters the ridges.* All the ridges of the field get well saturated through and through with the abundant rain. So God sends His Holy Spirit till the whole heart of man is moved and influenced by His Divine Operations. The understanding is enlightened, the conscience is quickened, the will is controlled, the affections are inflamed; all these powers—which I may call the ridges of the heart, and compare to the ridges of the field—come under the Divine Influence. It is ours to deal with men as men, bring to bear upon them Gospel Truth, and to set before them motives that are suitable to move rational creatures; but, after all, it is the rain from on high which alone can water the ridges—there is no hope of the heart being savingly affected except by Divine Operations.

Next it is added, *"You settle the furrows,"* by which some think it is meant that the furrows are drenched with water. Others think there is an allusion here to the beating down of the earth by heavy rain till the ridges become flat, and by the soaking of the water are settled into a more compact mass. Certain it is that the influences of God's Spirit have a humbling and settling effect upon a man. He was unsettled once like the earth that is dry and crumbly, and blown about and carried away with every wind; but as the earth, when soaked with wet, is compacted and knit together, so the heart becomes solid and serious under the power of

the Spirit. As the high parts of the ridge are beaten down into the furrows, so the lofty ideas, the grand schemes, and carnal boastings of the heart begin to level down when the Holy Spirit comes to work upon the soul. Genuine humility is a very gracious fruit of the Spirit. To be broken in heart is the best means of preparing the soul for Jesus. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." Brothers and Sisters, always be thankful when you see high thoughts of man brought down. This settling the furrows is a very gracious preparatory work of Divine Grace. Yet again, it is added, *"You make it soft with showers."* Man's heart is naturally hardened against the Gospel; like the Eastern soil, it is hard as iron if there is no gracious rain. How sweetly and effectively does the Spirit of God soften the man through and through! He is no longer towards the Word what he used to be; he feels everything, whereas once he felt nothing. The rock flows with water, the heart is dissolved in tenderness, the eyes are melted into tears.

All this is God's work. I have said already that God works through us, but still it is God's immediate work to send down the rain of His Grace from on high. Perhaps He is at work upon some of you though as yet there is no springing up of spiritual life in your souls. Though your condition is still a sad one, we will hope for you, that before long there shall be seen the living seed of Divine Grace sending up its tender green shoot above the soil, and may the Lord bless its springing up!

II. In the second place, let us deliver A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SPRINGING THEREOF.

After the operations of the Holy Spirit have been quietly going on for a certain season as pleases the great Master and Husbandman, then there are signs of Grace. Remember the Apostle's words, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." Some of our friends are greatly disturbed because they cannot see the full corn in the ear in themselves. They suppose that, if they were the subjects of a Divine work, they would be precisely like certain advanced Christians with whom it is their privilege to commune, or of whom they may have read in sundry excellent biographies. Beloved, this is a very great mistake. When Grace first enters the heart, it is not a great tree covering with its shadow whole acres, but it is the least of all seeds, like a grain of mustard seed. When it first rises upon the soul, it is not the sun shining at high noon, but it is the first dim ray of dawn. Are you so simple as to expect the harvest before you have passed through the springing season? I shall hope this morning that by a very brief description of the earliest stage of Christian experience some here may be led to say, "I have gone as far as that," and

then I hope you may be able to take the comfort of the text to yourselves: "You bless the springing thereof."

What then is the springing up of piety in the heart? What is this green blade? We think it is first seen in *sincerely earnest desires* after salvation. The man is not saved, in his own apprehension, but he longs to be. That which was once a matter of indifference is now a subject of intense concern. Once he despised Christians, and thought them needlessly earnest; he thought religion a mere trifle, and he looked upon the things of time and sense as the only substantial matters; but now how changed he is! He envies the meanest Christian, and sometimes thinks he would change places with the poorest Believer in the world if he might but be able to read his title clear to mansions in the skies. Now worldly things have lost dominion over him, and spiritual things are uppermost. Once with the unthinking many he cried, "Who will show us any good?" But now he cries, "Lord, lift up the light of Your Countenance upon me." Once it was the corn and the wine to which he looked for comfort, but now he looks to God alone. His rock of refuge must be God, for he finds no comfort elsewhere. His holy desires, which he had years ago, were like smoke from the chimney, soon blown away, but now his longings are permanent, though not always operative to the same degree, but still there they are. At times these desires amount to a hunger and a thirsting after righteousness, and yet he is not satisfied with these desires, but he wishes for a still more anxious longing after heavenly things. These desires are among the first springing up of Divine Life in the soul.

"The springing thereof" shows itself next in *prayer*. It *is* now real prayer. Once it was the mocking of God with holy sounds unattended by the heart; but now, though the prayer is such that he would not like a human ear to hear him, yet God approves it, for it is the talking of a spirit to a Spirit, and not the muttering of lips to an unknown God. His prayers, perhaps, are not very long; they do not amount to more than this—"Oh!" "Ah!" "Would to God!" "Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner!" and such-like short ejaculations; but, then, by God's Grace, they *are* prayers. "Behold he prays," does not refer to a long prayer; but it is quite as sure a proof of spiritual life within, if it only refers to a sigh or to a tear. These "groans that cannot be uttered," are among "the springing thereof."

Attending these there will also be manifest a *hearty love for the means of Grace,* and the House of God. The Bible, long unread, which was thought to be of little more use than an old almanac, is now treated with great consideration. And though the reader finds little in it that comforts

him just now, and much that alarms him, yet he feels that it is the Book for him, and he turns to its pages with hope. When he goes up to God's House, he listens eagerly, hoping that there may be a message for him. Before, he attended worship as a sort of pious necessity incumbent upon all respectable people, but now he goes up to God's House that he may, perhaps, find the Savior. Once there was no more religion in him than in the door which turns upon its hinges, but now he enters praying, "Lord, meet with my soul." And if he gets no blessing, he goes away sighing, "O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat." This is one of the blessed signs of "the springing thereof."

Yet more cheering is another, namely, that the soul in this state has *faith in Jesus Christ,* at least in some degree. It is not a faith which brings great joy and peace, but still it is a faith which keeps the heart from despair, and prevents its sinking under a sense of sin. I have known the time when I do not believe any man living could see faith in me, and when I could scarcely perceive any in myself, and yet I was bold to say, with Peter, "Lord, You know all things, *You* know that I love You." What man cannot see, Christ can see. Many people have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ but they are so much engaged in looking at it, that they do not see it. If they would look to Christ and not to their own faith, they would not only see Christ, but see their own faith, too. But they try to *measure* their faith, and it seems so little when they contrast it with the faith of full-grown Christians, that they fear it is not faith at all. Oh, little one, if you have faith enough to receive Christ, remember the promise, "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." Poor simple, weak-hearted, and troubled ones, look to Jesus and answer, Can such a Savior suffer in vain? Can such an Atonement be offered in vain? Can you trust Him, and yet be cast away? It cannot be! It never was in the Savior's heart to shake off one that did cling to His arm; however feeble the faith, He blesses "the springing thereof." The difficulty arises partly from misapprehension, and partly from lack of confidence in God.

I say misapprehension—now if like some Londoners you have never seen corn when it is green, you would cry out, "What? Do you say that yonder green stuff is corn?" "Yes," the farmer says, "that is corn." You look at it again and you reply, "Why, man alive, that is nothing but grass! You do not mean to tell me that this grassy stuff will ever produce a loaf of bread such as I see in the baker's window—I cannot conceive it." No, you could not conceive it, but when you get accustomed to it, it is not at all amazing to see the corn go through certain stages; first the blade, then the ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear. Some of you have

never seen growing Grace, and do not know anything about it, and when you are newly converted you meet with Christians who are like ripe golden ears, and you say, "I am not like they are." True, you are no more like they than that grassy stuff in the furrows is like full-grown corn! But you will grow to be like they are one of these days. You must expect to go through the blade period before you get to the ear period! And in the ear period you will have doubts whether you will ever come to the full corn in the ear—but you will arrive at perfection in due time. Thank God that you are in Christ at all, and do not mind so much *what* you are in Christ.

The point is, "Am I resting in Jesus Christ?" Well then, whether I am highly sanctified, or sanctification is only begun in me, whether I have much faith or little faith, whether I can do much for Christ or little for Christ is not the question; I am saved, not on account of what I am, but on account of what Jesus Christ is; and if I am trusting Him, however little in Israel I may be, I am as safe as the brightest of the saints, and as the very greatest of His servants.

I have said, however, that mixed with misapprehension there is a great deal of unbelief. I cannot put it all down to an ignorance that may be forgiven—I think there must be much of unbelief. O Sinner, why do you not trust Jesus Christ? Poor quickened, awakened Conscience—God gives you His word that He who trusts in Christ is not condemned—and yet you are afraid that you *are* condemned! This is to call God a liar! Be ashamed and confounded that you should ever have been guilty of doubting the Truthfulness of God! All your other sins do not grieve Christ so much as the sin of thinking that He is unwilling to forgive you, or the sin of suspecting that if you trust Him, He will cast you away! Do not slander His gracious Character; do not cast a slur upon the generosity of His tender heart. He said, "Him who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Come in the faith of His promise, and He will receive you right now!

I have thus given some description of "the springing thereof."

III. Well now, thirdly, and very briefly, according to the text, THERE IS ONE WHO SEES THIS SPRINGING. You, Lord—*You* bless the springing thereof.

I wish that some of us had quicker eyes to see the beginning of Grace in the souls of men. For lack of this we let slip many opportunities of helping the weaklings. If a woman had the charge of a number of children that were not her own, I do not suppose she would notice all the incipient stages of disease, but when a mother nurses her own dear children, as soon as ever upon the cheek or in the eye there is a token of approaching sickness, she perceives it at once. I wish we had just as

quick an eye, just as tender a heart towards precious souls. I do not doubt that many young people go weeks and even months in distress, who need not be, if you who know the Lord were a little more watchful to help them in the time of their sorrow. Shepherds are up all night at lambing time to catch up the lambs, as soon as they are born, and take them in and nurse them; and we, who ought to be shepherds for God, should be looking out for all the lambs, especially at seasons when there are many born into God's great fold—for tender nursing is needed in the first stages of the New Life. God, however, when His servants do not see "the springing thereof," sees it all.

Now, you silent, retired spirits, who dare not speak to father or mother, or brother or sister, I think this text ought to be a sweet morsel to you. *"You* bless the springing thereof," which proves that God sees you and your newborn Grace. The Lord sees the first sign of penitence. Though you only say to yourself, "I will arise, and go to my Father," your Father hears you. Though it is nothing but a desire, your Father registers it. "You put my tears into Your bottle. Are they not in Your book?" He is watching your return. He runs to meet you, and puts His arms about you, and kisses you with the kisses of His accepting love, O Soul, be encouraged with that thought, that up in the chamber or down by the hedge, or wherever it is that you have sought secrecy, God is there! Dwell on the thought, "You, God, see me." That is a precious text, "All my desire is before You," and here is another sweet one, "The Lord takes pleasure in them who fear Him, in them who hope in His mercy." He can see you when you only *hope* in His mercy, and He takes pleasure in you if you have only *begun* to fear Him. Here is a third choice word, "You will perfect that which concerns me." Have you a concern about these things? Is it a matter of soul-concern with you to be reconciled to God, and to have an interest in Jesus' precious blood? It is only the springing thereof, but He blesses it! It is written, "A bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench, till He brings forth judgment unto victory." There shall be victory for you, even before the Judgment Seat of God, though as yet you are only like the flax that smokes and gives no light, or like the reed that is broken and yields no music! God *does* see the springing thereof.

IV. A few words upon a fourth point. Namely, WHAT A MISERY IT WOULD BE IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO HAVE THIS SPRINGING WITHOUT GOD'S BLESSING!

The text says, "You *bless* the springing thereof." We must, just a moment, by way of contrast, think of how the springing would have been without the blessing. Suppose we were to see a revival among us without

God's blessing? It is my conviction that there are revivals which are not of God at all, but are produced by excitement. If there is no blessing from the Lord, it will be all a delusion, a bubble blown up into the air for a moment, and then gone to nothing. We shall only see the people stirred to become the more dull and dead afterwards. And this is a great mischief to the Church. In the individual heart, if there should be springing without God's blessing, there would be no good in it. Suppose you have good desires, but no blessing on these desires? They will only tantalize and worry you, and then, after a time, they will be gone and you will be more impervious than you were before to religious convictions. If religious desires are not of God's sending, but are caused by excitement, they will probably prevent your giving a serious hearing to the Word of God in times to come. If convictions do not soften they will certainly harden you. To what extremities have some been driven who have had springing of a certain sort which has not led them to Christ! Some have been crushed by despair. They tell us that religion crowds the madhouse—it is not true—but there is no doubt whatever that religiousness of a certain kind has driven many a man out of his mind. The poor souls have felt their wound but have not seen the balm; they have not known Jesus; they have had a sense of sin and nothing more. They have not fled for refuge to the hope which God has set before them. Marvel not if men go mad when they refuse the Savior! It may come as a judicial visitation of God upon those men who, when in great distress of mind, will not fly to Christ. I believe it is like this with some—you must either fly to Jesus or else your burden will become heavier and heavier until your spirit will utterly fail. This is not the fault of religion—it is the fault of those who will not accept the remedy which religion presents. A springing up of desires without God's blessing would be an awful thing, but we thank Him that we are not left in such a case.

V. And now I have to dwell upon THE COMFORTING THOUGHT THAT GOD DOES BLESS "THE SPRINGING THEREOF." I wish to deal with you who are tender and troubled this morning. I want to show that God *does* bless your springing. He does it in many ways. Frequently He does it by the cordials which He brings. You have a few very sweet moments, but you cannot say that you are Christ's, but at times the bells of your heart ring very sweetly at the mention of His name. The means of Grace are very precious to you. When you gather to the Lord's worship you feel a holy calm, and you go away from the service wishing that there were seven Sundays in the week instead of one. By the blessing of God, the Word has just suited your case as if the Lord had sent His servants on purpose to you; you lay aside your crutches for a while, and you begin to

run without weariness; though these things have been only temporary and transient, I would have you think of them as tokens for good. On the other hand, if you have had none of these comforts, or few of them, and the means of Grace have not been consolations to you, I want you to look upon that as a blessing. It may be the greatest blessing that God can give us to take away all comforts on the road, in order to quicken our running towards the Great Refuge. When a man is flying to the City of Refuge to be protected from the man-slayer, it may be an act of great consideration to stop him for a moment, that he may quench his thirst and run more swiftly afterwards; but perhaps, in a case of imminent peril, it may be the kindest thing neither to give him anything to eat or to drink, nor invite him to stop for a moment—in order that he may fly with undiminished speed straight to the place of safety.

The Lord may be blessing you in the uneasiness which you feel. Inasmuch as you cannot say that you are in Christ, it may be the greatest blessing which Heaven can give to take away every other blessing from you, in order that you may be compelled to rest in the Lord. You, perhaps, have a little of your self-righteousness left, and while you have, you cannot get joy and comfort. The royal robe which Jesus gives will never shine brilliantly upon us till every rag of our own goodness is gone. Perhaps you are not empty enough, and God will never fill you with Christ till you are. Fear often drives men to faith. Have you ever heard of a person walking in the fields into whose bosom a bird has flown because pursued by the hawk? Poor timid thing, it would not have ventured there had not a *greater* fear compelled it! All this may be so with you. Your fears may be sent to drive you more swiftly and more closely to the Savior, and if so, I see in these present sorrows the signs that God is blessing "the springing thereof." In looking back upon my own "springing" I sometimes think God blessed me then in a lovelier way than now. Though I would not willingly return to that early stage of my spiritual life, yet there were many joys about it. An apple tree when loaded with apples is a very comely sight, but give me, for beauty, the apple tree in bloom. The whole world does not present a more lovely sight than an apple blossom! Now, a full-grown Christian laden with fruit is a comely sight, but still there is a peculiar loveliness about the young Christian in bloom. Let me tell you what that blessedness is. You now probably have a greater horror of sin than professors who have known the Lord for years; they might wish that they felt your tenderness of conscience. You have now a graver sense of duty, and a more solemn fear of the neglect of it than some who are further advanced; you have also a greater zeal than many—you are now doing your first works for God, and

burning with your first love—nothing is too hot or too heavy for you. I pray that you may never decline, but always advance.

And now to close. I think there are three lessons for us to learn. First, *let older Believers be very gentle and kind to young Believers.* God blesses their springing thereof—mind that you do the same. Do not throw cold water upon young desires; do not snuff out young Believers with hard questions. When they are babes and need the milk of the Word, do not be choking them with your strong meat—they will eat strong meat by-and-by, but not just yet. Remember, Jacob would not overdrive the lambs. Be equally prudent. Teach and instruct them, but let it be with gentleness and tenderness—not as their superiors, but as nursing fathers for Christ's sake. God, you see, blesses their springing thereof—may He bless it through you!

The next thing I have to say is*, fulfill the duty of gratitude.* Beloved, if God blesses the springing of our revival here, let us praise Him—let it cheer our hearts. If you have only seen the first shoot peeping up through the mold, be thankful. And as you see the green blade waving in the breeze, be thankful for the ankle-deep verdure, and you shall soon see the commencement of the ear! Be thankful for the first green ears, and you shall see the flowering of the corn, and by-and-by its ripening, and the joyous harvest.

The last lesson is one of *encouragement*. If God blesses "the spring thereof," dear Beginners, what will He not do for you in later days? If He gives you such a meal when you break your fast, what dainties will be on your table when He says to you, "Come and dine"? And what a banquet will He furnish at the Supper of the Lamb! O troubled One! Let the storms which howl, and the snows which fall, and the wintry blasts that nip your springing, all be forgotten in this one consoling thought—God blesses your springing, and whom God blesses none can curse. Over your head, dear, desiring, pleading, languishing Soul, the Lord of Heaven and earth pronounces the blessing of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Take that blessing and rejoice in it evermore. Amen.

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MAN'S THOUGHTS AND GOD'S THOUGHTS
NO. 676

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 18, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."
Isaiah 55:8, 9.

THE text speaks of *thoughts*; it mentions the thoughts of man and the thoughts of God. The power of thought is one point in which man is made in the image of God. Other animated creatures which are put in subjection to the thinking, intelligent creature, man, have no fellowship with God in thought; into His world of pure spirit they cannot enter. To the majestic lion or to the monstrous leviathan, no speech could be addressed by God involving the terms, "My thoughts" and "Your thoughts," but the Lord is here speaking to a creature of another mold which He has made a living soul, capable of fellowship with the invisible, the spiritual, and the Divine. When men do not think, and especially when they do not think of the highest and most important matters, they degrade themselves from the true position and occupation of immortal minds. The beast's spirit goes downward, and frivolous, thoughtless persons do as much as they can to descend to the groveling level of the mere animal. Thought is that which likens us unto God. The powers of mind when rightly exercised upon eternal things, are the means of uplifting us to the highest point to which unaided human nature can attain, and low as this point is, it is vastly better than brutish carelessness. I see the thoughtless soul yonder moving on all fours with the beast looking for nothing more than food and drink; the thoughtful I see walking erect with his brow toward Heaven seeking for something which clods of clay cannot yield him. I am thankful this morning if you have begun to think upon spiritual things, and though there should unhappily be a spice of skepticism about your thoughts, though they should be mournfully far from being God's thoughts, yet I shall hail it as no ill omen if you think at all. The man who begins to think about God and his soul, and eternity and sin, and righteousness, is becoming like the bones in the vision when there was a noise and a shaking, and there is a prospect that before long bone will come to his bone and the dead shall live. As for you who never think at all, my text can scarcely yield you a single ray of comfort; for you it is my first duty to pray that the Lord may lead you to exercise the royal prerogative of thought, and to shake you from the terrible lethargy into which you have fallen.

In the text we have two persons thinking; and the result—man's thoughts and God's thoughts. God's thoughts are declared by Himself to be exceedingly above man's, and yet if ever man is to dwell with God, he

must think as God thinks. "How can two walk together except they are agreed?" If my thoughts run this way, and God's thoughts are in an opposite direction, I cannot have any fellowship with Him. My thoughts must be conformed to God's thoughts, or I cannot be like He and walk with Him. Yet He tells me that His thoughts are not my thoughts, but are as high above mine as the heavens are above the earth; what then can I do to rise to Him? Think as much as I please, thinking only sets me on my feet, and so far does me service, but it still leaves me on earth, and God is yonder far above me, and my thoughts can no more attain unto Him than an infant can touch the stars with his finger. Still it is a comfort to me if I am sincerely thoughtful after God, that He is thinking about me, for if my thoughts cannot bear me up to Him, His thoughts can bring Him down to me, and when He has established a connection between the Heaven which is above me, and the earth which is beneath Himself, then I, laying hold on His thoughts, and believing what He has thought out for me, shall be drawn up to His elevation, and I shall come to think His thoughts, and so be in communion and fellowship with the Most High.

This morning I want, as the Holy Spirit enables me, to speak to those who have been led so far as to have thoughts concerning eternal things, and especially thoughts upon forgiveness of sin; you have as yet only your own thoughts, and these are troubling and misleading you. I desire to contrast your thoughts with God's thoughts in the hope that you may lay hold on God's thoughts by faith, and that holding them fast you may be drawn up by them as by a Divine Hand into a clearer atmosphere, and into a happier state than that in which your soul now sits, weeping and disconsolate. It may be that into perfect peace and joyous confidence God's thoughts may lift you as on eagle's wings this morning; a work which your deepest and most anxious thoughts can never achieve for you.

I shall attempt first, this morning, to contrast your thoughts *as to the possibility of pardon* with God's thoughts; then, secondly, your thoughts as to *the plan of pardon* shall be set in the same light; and thirdly, your thoughts as to *the present possession of personal pardon* shall pass in brief review.

I. May the Holy Spirit help me while I endeavor to compare your thoughts of THE POSSIBILITY OF PARDON with God's thoughts about it. You naturally form your ideas of God's ways from what you conceive would be yours if you were in His position. I take you on that ground this morning, and we will suppose that some wicked person has very grossly injured you, and that the question of your forgiving him is now before you. We will suppose you to be of a generous, frank, forgiving disposition, and in a calm and judicious state of mind. You are ready to act most leniently, but still, the case in hand is no trifle and requires consideration. After well pondering and considering the matter, you feel bound to say, *"I could forgive this person, but his offense is of a peculiarly grievous kind.* Had he robbed me of my purse or my estate, I could have overlooked it, but he has despoiled my character, he has touched my person in its most tender part, and injured me to the highest extent

possible. I could forgive ten thousand other forms of trespass, but the form of evil from which he has made me suffer is peculiarly offensive and injurious to me. The person under consideration has perpetrated the worst conceivable form of wrong against me, and with the most sincere desire to pass over it, I feel that I must not, but must let the law take its course." There have been many occasions when persons aggrieved have thus spoken, and when no reasonable person could have blamed them. Such, O awakened Sinner, is your case before the Lord, and if He should think of you as one man would think of another, you must admit Him to be Just. It is certain, dear Friend, that you have offended God in the most tender point; you have denied His right to you, though you are His creature; you have denied your Maker's right to command you, saying, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?"

Though you have been a pensioner upon His daily bounty, you have constantly insisted upon it that you were your own master, and had a right to do just as you pleased. You have thus invaded the crown rights of the King of kings, and committed treason against His Sovereignty which He guards most jealously—worst of all you have committed sin against His only begotten and most dear Son, the Lord Jesus. You may not have persecuted His people, or spoken against His Deity; but you have slighted the precious blood, and you have passed by the crucified Savior as though His Atonement were nothing to you. You have thus perpetrated the most provoking offense against God, and touched Him in the apple of His eye. If it were your case, you could not forgive; but be astonished as you hear that your thoughts are not God's thoughts, and His ways of forgiveness are as high above your ways as the heavens are above the earth. If you trust in the Lord Jesus, your iniquity, although most heinous and detestable, shall be blotted out forever.

It is supposable that when you are weighing the case of an offender you decide upon it thus: "I could forgive him, bad as the sin is, if I thought he had fallen into it from inadvertence or carelessness, or if I supposed that he was moved by some great hope of gain for himself, but the offense was *intentional, malicious, and wanton,* and therefore I cannot remit it." Naturally you transfer these thoughts of yours to the Lord of Heaven, and you say, "He will never pardon me for I have trespassed willfully. I knew the right, but I chose the wrong. I was never a gainer by my sins; I was often made to smart through them, and even when I became like a burnt child, I wanted only to thrust my finger into the fire again. I had no conceivable motive for sin except the determined and incorrigible love of evil. I drank down iniquity as the ox drinks down water; but the ox drinks to slake his thirst, I only gratified my passions and hardly that, for the more I sinned, the more unhappy I became; the more I drank of that ill stream, the more my horrid thirst came upon me. I have sinned without excuse." My dear Friend, such language as this befits a penitent's tongue, but since you have Jehovah in Christ Jesus to deal with, do not despair; *men* cannot forgive their fellows when they perceive wanton malice in their crimes, but God can forgive YOU, and though you have intentionally slighted, grieved, vexed, and even

blasphemed Him, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His ways above your ways!

You will in some cases also be obliged to say, "I could very readily have overlooked this fault, but *it has been repeated.* It was not once, nor twice, nor even 20 times, but this person has so hated me, that he has purposely spited me every day of his life. He has teased and worried me with his insolence till I cannot do other than let my wrath loose against him! Forgive him? I might have done it if it were 70 times seven, but he has out-Heroded Herod, and gone beyond all number in his insults and injuries. You cannot expect me to forgive." Such, exactly, is your case, O troubled Sinner, with regard to God. It is certain that your offenses are as many as the sands on the seashore. You have through a life of twenty, thirty, forty, perhaps 60 or 70 years, done nothing else but sin; your transgressions have been as numerous as the beats of your pulse, but still, though you hardly dare to think of forgiveness, God can not only think of it, but bestow it! The sins of twice ten thousand years He can blot out in a moment if there could be supposed a sinner who had them all heaped upon himself; God's thoughts are not your thoughts with regard to the number of sins, neither are His ways your ways.

I can conceive a person greatly injured saying, "I would overlook all these injuries which have been hurled against me, but I cannot see any reason why I should have been the particular objective of this man's spite; it has been quite *undeserved on my part, and unprovoked.* I never gave this enemy of mine any occasion to speak against me; I never did him an ill turn—on the contrary, if he has asked me for any help, I have always given it cheerfully and generously." That would be a very excellent reason in a court of justice for insisting on the punishment of an offender; a judge would allow very much weight to it, and everyone would admit its reasoning. Powerful indeed would it be in your case, O guilty Sinner, if the Lord should plead it. Listen, I pray you, to the Voice of the good God whom you have injured. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider." What do you think is the sequel to this very just but sad complaint? Is it, "Because of this ingratitude I will never forgive"? No. "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." Dear Friend, you have received nothing from God but mercy, and though you have been very evil, what a mercy it is that you are spared. You brought on your sickness by your own sin, and tender mercy might have been worn out with your rebellions, and have let you destroy yourself outright; but God has spared you; He has been provoked, but He has kept back His mighty hand, and you are a trophy of His wonderful long-suffering. Oh why do you continue to sin against Him? Why do you rebel against One so kind? How can you be so ungenerous to a God so full of Grace? Let His love melt you, for although *men* cannot forgive the ungrateful wretches who wound their benefactors, yet the Lord's

thoughts are as much above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth.

"Yes," says an offended person, "I might overlook the fault if I thought the man were wholly humbled now; but you see he asks me to pardon him, but he has not *a sufficient sense of his guilt.* He has no idea of how much I have had to smart—it has been sport to him, but it has been death to me, and he does not seem to be rightly aware of the really heinous nature of his sin. He asks for pardon very glibly, with a very smooth tongue, but I believe if he were left to himself, and had an opportunity, he would do the same again, how can you expect me to forgive him?" Troubled Sinner, this is very much your case. You are somewhat broken down this morning, but you must confess that your heart is still hard, compared with what it ought to be. I do not think any of us have such a sense of sin as could be called a perfect sense of it. The most grieved, broken, and contrite sinner does not perceive all the blackness of sin as God perceives it; and I am afraid the most of us, though we do come to Christ, must mourn that we do not mourn more thoroughly and bitterly over our sins. We have sometimes made an excuse for not pardoning an offender because of his lack of humbling, but God does not do so; He says, "I will take away the heart of stone, and I will give them a heart of flesh." He does not say, "I will have nothing to do with that sinner because he has a stony heart." No, "I will take away the heart of stone out of his flesh, and give him a heart of flesh." Here is mercy indeed, mercy looking upon the heart of adamant, and melting it until it becomes as wax; long-suffering bearing with impenitence, and then putting its own hand to the work to turn impenitence into contrition of soul. Truly is it written, "My thoughts are not your thoughts."

"Still," exclaims the aggrieved party, "I think the man *ought to make me some compensation.* He speaks of forgiveness, but then look at the mischief he has done me all these past years. He ought to propose something by way of making amends to me for the evil which he has done." This principle is very properly recognized in courts of justice; it is always thought that when a man has sustained a wanton injury he is not to be expected to overlook it unless compensation is offered. Now, poor Sinner, you feel that you cannot bring any compensation. If you know yourself aright, you perceive that you can do nothing to undo what you have done. You have dishonored the Law of God in such a way that there is no hope of your ever removing the affront. But our loving God does not ask you for any compensation—He says, "Only return unto Me." "Only confess your iniquity which you have committed." Only acknowledge, as David did to Nathan, the sin you have done, and you shall receive, through Jesus, a word like that which Nathan brought to David—"The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die." He who confesses and forsakes his sin shall find mercy. No compensation is needed, but sin is freely forgiven for Jesus' sake.

Naturally many a just-minded person would say, "If I were most gracious, yet I could not find it in my heart to freely forgive when I see *the consequences always before my eyes."* Suppose that somebody had wantonly injured your child; suppose he had broken one of your child's

limbs, for instance; I think I hear you say, "I could forgive him, but look at my poor limping child. Do you expect a father to freely forgive when he sees that poor limping one constantly before him to remind him of this man's wanton cruelty? Can I forgive?" But, Sinner, God sees before Him daily tokens of what you have done! Frivolous, dissolute man, there is that poor girl's ruined body and soul through you, in years gone by, and nothing you can ever do can undo that mischief. Could your tears flow forever, you can never undo the past, nor restore the lost one. Could you bring that wandering soul back by Divine Grace, even then the bitter past could not be unwritten, for she, too, has spread the poison. All that accursed past of sin must live on. God forgives sin, but much of the consequences of sin God Himself does not prevent. If you light the fire, it will burn on to the lowest Hell; God may forgive your evil deeds, but the fire itself still continues. You spoke a word against the Lord Jesus in the ears of some youngster years gone by which turned him aside from the right path. You cannot unsay it, and that youngster's infidelity and unbelief you cannot now destroy. The perpetual mischief which you have done to others might fitly be a reason which the Most High should not forgive you; but yet He says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts." With all this before Him, with all the consequences of your sin before Him, He forgives you freely if you rest on Jesus!

Ah, it is an amazing thing, we may have been the instrument of sending others down to the pit of Hell, and alas, we cannot restore them from their endless woe—yet we may, by Grace, *amazing Grace*—be delivered ourselves from the horrible doom of sinners! The mercy of God may be extolled in us, and His justice in them. There is the infidel, the atheist, who has poisoned the minds of others and sent them down to Hell, and yet Almighty Mercy saves him at the last hour. He cannot save his dupes, he cannot pull up his followers from the Pit of Hell, but he is himself saved. What a stupendous wonder of Divine Sovereignty and Grace! Well did we sing just now—

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who gives Grace so rich and free?"

Furthermore, I can conceive a case in which the offended party can fairly say, "I do feel from my heart fully prepared to forget this offense against me, but *it was public, and therefore highly obnoxious and injurious.* If no one else had known it, I think I might have overlooked it; but this was done in the marketplace, and not in a corner. I was put to public shame before a company of those whose respect I deserved. I was laughed at in the streets through the infamous villainy of this man. Do you expect me to pass by such an affront as that?" Trembling Sinner, you also may well think, "Surely God will never forgive me, for against Him only have I sinned, and done this evil in His sight. I sinned in the face of the sun. My iniquities were open and visible to all. I sinned unblushingly, and gloried in my shame." Rejoice, poor Mourner, that this is no reason why the Lord should not forgive you, for as high as the heavens are above the earth so high are His thoughts above your thoughts. Only turn to Him with a simple confession upon your heart, and put your trust in His dear Son, and He will put all this away!

I will not prolong this talk, but only mention one more dark line of guilt. I can imagine it possible that an offended person might add, by way of clenching all his arguments against pardon, this one—"*My forgiveness he has already despised.* I have often asked this man to be at peace with me. I have put myself out of the way to be at peace with him. Notwithstanding all his malice and mischief, I have said to him, 'Come, let us make a treaty and be friends. Why should this enmity continue? Why should there not be peace between us?' And when I have done this, he has turned scornfully on his heels, and has said that he defied my mercy, and cared not for my love. I have acted thus generously many times, I have put myself to a great expense in order to subdue his hatred and set him right with me, and yet he has stood out against me. How can reason and justice expect me to do any more?" I might, perhaps, answer, "No, neither of them can well expect more of you; but what we cannot expect of *you*, the guilty penitent may yet expect of God." After all these years of rebellion, after these many times in which you have rejected loving invitations given by a tender mother or an earnest minister in God's name, after these multiplied rejections, His mercy is not gone forever, neither does His loving kindness fail. It is astonishing that some of you are still on earth after the many, many times that you have been bestirred in soul to call unto God. I know it has not been this voice only which has called you, but there has been a voice within—your conscience, your awakened conscience has cried to you—"Return unto the Lord your God." But you have silenced the thunder of conscience so many times, that it is a marvel the Holy Spirit has not said, "Let him alone, he is given unto idols." Here you are, still on praying ground and pleading terms with God. Thank Him for it, and be grateful that all these rejections have not moved Him to swear that you shall not enter into His rest. He waits still to be gracious—

"Still does His good Spirit strive
With the chief of sinners."

May God grant that you may have made your last rejection, and may you, this day, yield to the Savior!

I should like to ask a favor of anyone here who is under conviction of sin, and who has formed his thoughts of God from what he would do if he were in God's place. I would earnestly beg him to go out into the street, or the field, or the garden, wherever he best can this afternoon, and just look up and try, if he can, form an idea of how high the heavens are above the earth. Or if you prefer, when night comes on, stand under that starry canopy and think about how high those heavens are above the earth. You need not limit your contemplations to the planets and the nearest of the fixed stars—go beyond, beyond, beyond, beyond the most distant of the nebulae, and think how matchless the heavens are in height above the globe on which we tread. Think over, if you will, what you know concerning astronomy. Measure the infinite leagues of space which lie beyond the narrow bounds of our solar system, or even of this universe of visible stars; and then remember that as high as these heavens are above the earth, so high are the Lord's thoughts above your thoughts, and His ways above your ways! Indeed, there is no comparison

between the two, for He says positively, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways."

II. Let us now turn to the second head and contrast your thoughts about THE PLAN OF PARDON with God's thoughts.

If you have advanced far enough to believe that God can pardon, and have to this extent laid hold upon God's thoughts, it is well; but still another of your own thoughts drags you down, for you have a wrong idea of *the way* of pardon. I will suppose that there are persons here who ignorantly say, "If it is true that the Lord will pardon sin, let Him *do it outright;* let Him just take the pen and mark through all my transgressions, and have done with them; He has but to say, 'I forgive you,' and that is the end of it." But God's thoughts are not your thoughts in this case. You have evidently become so impure in heart as to look upon sin as a trifle; but the Judge of all the earth is of another mind. He is the Governor of all worlds, and must maintain His government. there may be tens of thousands of races of creatures all subject to Him, and governed by the same Law of Immutable Right and Justice. If it were whispered throughout the universe that on so much as one solitary occasion the Judge of all the earth had winked at sin, and exercised His Sovereignty to suspend His moral Law, and to deny Justice its due, it would not matter how obscure an object the tolerated sinner might be, he would be quoted in every world and mentioned by every race of creatures as a proof that Divine Justice was not invariable and without respect of persons. If it is right to punish sin at all, it must be right to do so in every case; and allowing sin to go unpunished in one case, would be a sort of confession that the penalty was too severe. Now, therefore, the Great Ruler cannot allow sin to go unpunished. God as a moral Governor is such in all His actions, on the smallest scale, as it would be best for Him to be on the grandest scale. If God forgave sin without penalty, He would no longer be equally resplendent in every attribute since Mercy would eclipse Justice.

Princes may, on earth, exercise their sovereignty with a mercy which forgets justice. This is because of the imperfection of the laws which they administer, or of themselves as governors. But God, reigning as a perfect Governor, administering perfect Laws, never allows exceptions or does other than what is right. Jehovah is invariably the same, and if the angels that sinned were punished, so must every other sinning creature be punished, or else God will have changed, which can never be, since He is the same forevermore. Now, Sinner, you think that God might forgive you and no hurt would come of it. I have hinted that there might be an universal evil spreading through unnumbered worlds by the forgiveness of the most obscure individual without the exaction of a penalty; the foundations would be removed, and then what could even the righteous do? No, God will not forgive you without penalty; your thoughts are not His thoughts; He will have stroke for stroke, and what the Law required it shall receive; He will not pass by your transgressions without exacting the full demands of His Justice.

I have no doubt there are others here who have a notion that God may, perhaps, forgive them *by putting them through a course of affliction.*

It is still a superstitious notion lingering in England that poor persons are the special subjects of Divine Favor, and that hard work and poverty, and especially a long lingering sickness, are a means of putting away sin; for persons so afflicted have had so much misery in this life that they do not deserve to suffer more. This is a lie which is seldom mentioned in the pulpit, because it is thought to be non-existent; but we know it to be very prevalent among certain classes. But oh, my Hearer, your thoughts on this matter are not God's thoughts. The eternal miseries of Hell are not a full expiation for the unutterable blackness of sin, much less can the miseries of this life be. You may be as poor as Lazarus, but never lie in Abraham's bosom; you may endure as many sufferings here as fell to the lot of Job, and yet you may go from Job's dunghill to the flames of Hell. Cast out any idea that these sufferings or privations of yours can make atonement for sin. God's thoughts are not your thoughts.

A more current idea still is, that God will put away the past and give men a new start, and that *if they go on well for the future, then in their dying hour, when it comes to the end, God will pardon them.* But Soul, there is nothing of that said in the Word of God. That truthful Book tells us solemnly that as far as the matter of keeping the Law and being saved by our good works are concerned, we have, all of us, but one opportunity, and the moment we commit one sin that opportunity is over. No, before we began life our father Adam had spoiled that chance for us by his sin. The Word of God never speaks about giving us a second chance. The Law says, "Cursed is every man that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them." It says nothing whatever of starting in business again in the hopes that you may at last make your spiritual fortune; nothing of the kind—and those of you who are trying your hands at reformation, and hoping that in a dying hour you will get peace to your souls, are spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which profits not, for if you never sinned in the future, what would that have to do with the past? Will a man's paying ready money in the future defray the debts which he has already incurred? God has a right to the obedience of your whole life; do you suppose that giving Him the obedience of a part of it will be accepted as a satisfaction for the whole?

Moreover, who are you that you should be holy? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. You will only repeat your former life, you will go back again like the dog to its vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. As for peace in the hour of death, he who is not pardoned living is not likely to be pardoned dying. Nine out of ten, perhaps 999 out of every thousand of professed deathbed salvations are a delusion. We have good facts to prove that. A certain physician collected notes of several hundreds of cases of persons who professed conversion who were supposed to be dying. These persons did not die but lived, and in the case of all but one, they lived just as they had lived before, though when they were thought to be dying they appeared as if they were truly converted. Do not look forward to that, it is a mere snare of Satan. God save you from it; for in this case His thoughts are not your thoughts.

There is a very current supposition, however, that God pardons sin in this way; that He says, "Well now, I forgive you the past. My Law was a little too severe for you, *but I will try you again under a more lenient rule.* Do us well as you can, attend a place of worship, pray and be very religious, and I will save you." Ah, but my dear Friend, God does nothing of the kind! He does not say to a sinner, "There, Sinner, I forgive the past, you must see how you can behave for the future." The forgiveness which is given to a sinner reaches to the sins which are yet to be committed as well as to the sins which he has already done—

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast.
And oh my Soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come here's pardon too!"

Jesus does not forgive a part, but He forgives the whole. He says, "I absolve you, none shall lay anything to your charge." And this is not only for the present but for the future, too. It is a forgiveness which makes a clean sweep of all sin, since all the sin of all Believers is present sin in the sight of God though it is not present sin to them.

If the Lord forgives you at all, dear Sinner, let me tell you what He will do—He will punish that sin of yours, no He has punished it in Christ. Christ stood for you and bore all that you ought to have borne from the Wrath of God, and therefore God is severely just while He is bountifully merciful to you. In the next place, when God forgives you He does it unconditionally. He will not forgive you on the condition of this or that in the future, but He now speaks the words, "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities." All this He can do in a moment; before that clock ticks yet again the sentence may go forth, "That soul has trusted My dear Son, and I have made him whiter than snow, and whiter than snow He shall be in My sight in time and in eternity. I have cast all his sins behind My back, I have covered him with a robe of righteousness; he is now Mine, and he shall be Mine in the day when I make up My jewels." Here is a pardon which you have not to earn, but to accept freely. Here is a pardon given to you, not on the condition of anything you are to be, to feel, to do, or to give; but a pardon given freely to you out of the riches of God's loving kindness and tender mercy. Jesus Christ has bought it; Jesus Christ has bought it *for you;* He brings it to you now; and oh, if you have Divine Grace to receive it, you may accept it, and go on your way rejoicing in the Lord your God! This is a pardon worth receiving! Let me ask you a second time to look up and consider that all your ideas of God's pardon are but thoughts here on the earth, but His thoughts of love to you are as high above you as the heavens are above the earth.

III. To conclude. Time seems to have traveled at double speed this morning; I wanted to have said, in the third place, a little as to THE PRESENT POSSESSION of this pardon. There is an idea in the mind of many of you that the plan of just trusting in Christ, and being pardoned on the spot *is too simple to be safe.* You want a plan which involves a host of Latin and Greek, and all sorts of ornaments and garments; and you want vestments, and altars, and prayers, and hymns, and chants, and *Te Deums,* and all that kind of thing; you want a long ceremony of

baptism, confirmation, confession, communion, penance, matins, vespers, festivals, and I know not what; but the Gospel is, "Trust Jesus and live," "Believe on Jesus Christ, and you are saved." It is too simple, you think, to be safe. Now, it is a well known fact that the simplest remedies are the most potent and safe; and, certainly, the simplest rules in mechanics are just those upon which the greatest engineers construct their most wonderful constructions. The moment you get to complexity you get into a snarl, and are on the brink of weakness. Simplicity, how solid it is! See the old-fashioned plan of putting a plank across the village brook—that was the old way of making a bridge. Well, then, somebody came in and invented an arch—a grand invention, certainly, but not in all cases available, because in a measure complex. What are the engineers coming back to? The old plan of the plank. The Menai tubular bridge is nothing more than the old plan of a plank thrown across the brook, and more and more great engineers revert to simplicities. When man grows wisest, he comes back to where he was when he started. I suppose that when the swan first sailed across the lake it gave to the navigator the best possible model of a vessel, to which navigation will always have to keep close if it would keep close to the true and beautiful.

Now, as in Nature simplicity is strength, so is it certainly in Divine Grace. Trust Christ and live! And let me say, simple as it looks, it is the most philosophical plan of salvation that could have been thought out, for faith is the mainspring of the entire man, and when faith is right all the powers are right. Teaching men morals is as though I had a clock that would not go, and I turned round one of the cog-wheels; but faith takes the key and winds up the mainspring, and the whole thing runs on readily. Do not despise the Gospel because it is simple. Trust Christ, and you shall live now! Believe that Jesus Christ has made a full Atonement, and rest yourself wholly on Him, just as I rest wholly now upon this rail; with your whole weight rest on Christ, and if you are not saved the Word of God does not speak the truth, for it is written, "He who believes on Him is not condemned." "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved."

I think I hear you say, *"It is too good to be true."* That is an objection I myself fought with for a very long time; but surely the best things about our good God must be the truest. If anyone should tell me a thing that was not very good about God, I might indignantly say, "That must be untrue; if it is about God it must be good, and as it is about the Most High it must be good in the highest degree." Oh Sinner, it does seem a very wonderful thing that you should be made a child of Heaven this morning—crimes of such horror and multitude be forgiven in a moment—it does seem too good to be true! But then it is just like our God. "Is not it *surprising*," said one to a good old saint, "that God should forgive such sins?" "No," she said, "it is not *surprising*, it is just like our God." And it *is* just like He—just like a God who gave His own dear Son to die that He should take the prodigal and fall upon his neck, and kiss him, and feast him, and rejoice and be merry because His lost one was found!

Lastly, I think I hear your heart say, "It seems to me to be a plan *too swift to be sure.* What? In a moment? I can understand getting through a

long treadmill of doubts that would take me a dozen years, and then getting into something like light and peace, but can all this be done in an *instant?"* "I do not believe in those medicines," says one, "which say 'cured in an instant.'" Very likely not, there are many quacks about! But this is no human cure, this is a Divine prescription. Believe and live! Have done with yourself and begin with Christ. From sin to holiness, from earth to Heaven is only *one step*—that one step is out of self and into Christ. The thing is as simple as taking that step. "Why is it so difficult, then?" asks somebody. Because your hearts are hard. It is not difficult in itself. If it were a harder thing you would like it better, but it is because it is so simple that your wicked heart will never take it till God the Holy Spirit breaks that heart. I never knew a man believe in Jesus Christ till he felt he could not do anything else. "Well," he says, "I cannot save myself, and I will therefore let Christ do it." May the Lord pump you dry of all your self-sufficiency, and then the stream of Eternal Mercy will come flowing down through the silver pipe of the Atoning Sacrifice, and you shall rejoice and live.

I have now to say to every sinner here, in conclusion, that my God is a God willing to pardon, a God passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin; and these are His words, not only to the whole of you as a mass, but to each unconverted person in particular, though I cannot point the finger to everyone. "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Do not those words melt you at all? I pray God that He may bless them to you. You have been restored, brought here again after much affliction. God has been gracious to you. He has passed by much sin in His long-suffering. Oh, let Heaven's mercy melt you! He seems to me, this morning, to be standing here, and to be saying, "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How can I set you as Admah? How can I make you as Zeboim? My heart is moved, my repentings are kindled together. I will not destroy you, for I am God and not man." Fly, then, to your Father's bosom! Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way! And may this day witness joy in Heaven, because the prodigal has returned, and the lost sheep is found! God bless this simple address to each of us, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 55.

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FAITH VERSUS SIGHT
NO. 677

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

"For we walk by faith, not by sight."
2 Corinthians 5:7.

I THINK the Apostle is explaining here how it was he could say, that while he was at home in the body, he was absent from the Lord; and through what means he felt that this was not the state in which he wished to be forever. Having been possessed, and actuated, and moved by the principle of faith, he was not content to tabernacle in a body which could only be dwelt in satisfactorily through the influence of the faculty of sight.

The Apostle, however, mentions here a great general principle—"We walk by faith, not by sight," and, in talking upon this text this evening, we shall—without pretending to go into it fully—speak, first of all, upon *the posture mentioned;* then upon *the two principles contrasted;* and finally upon *a certain caution which is here implied.*

I. First, a word or two about THE POSTURE MENTIONED.

Paul, speaking of Believers, says: "We *walk* by faith, not by sight." Walking is, of course, *a posture which implies the possession of life.* You can make a dead man sit in a certain position, or even stand in a chosen attitude; but to walk necessitates the possession of inward *life*. It becomes with us, therefore, a question in the first place, whether we have the life of God within us. In the sense in which the term "walk" is here used, the ungodly man does not walk at all. He hastens after his own lusts, and he treads in the way of the flesh; but in a spiritual sense he is, and always must be a stranger to "walking" until God has quickened him. When we see corpses walking along our roads, and pass them at eventide in our streets, then shall we expect to see Christian feelings, Christian emotions, and Christian character exhibited by unconverted men, but not till then. There must first be an inward life before, there can be the outward sign of it.

But, walking is a position which also signifies *activity*. You would suppose, from the way in which some Christians behave themselves, that their whole life was spent in meditation. It is a blessed thing to sit—

"With Mary at the Master's feet,"

but *we walk* as well as sit. We do not merely learn, but we practice what we know. We are not simply scholars, but, having been taught as scholars, we go on to show our scholarship by working in the vineyard or wherever else the Master may be pleased to place us. The mystics are a class of people who have a peculiar attraction for my mind; and I suppose the mention of such a name as that of Madame Guyon, who, among females, stands at the very head of the school, will awaken in many of you many sweet remembrances of times enjoyed in reading her blessed hymns, and of her sweet and admirable life. But, after all, it is

not the highest style of Christian living to be a mystic. "We walk." Some Christians seem as if they always sit, but, *"we* walk." You would gather, indeed, from what others say, that the whole life of a Christian is to be spent in prayer. Prayer, it is true, is the vitality of the secret parts of Christian life, but we are not always on our knees, we are not constantly engaged in seeking blessings from Heaven. We do, "continue in prayer," but we are also engaged in showing forth to others the blessings which we have received, and in exhibiting in our daily actions the fruits which we have gathered on the mountaintop of communion with God. "We *walk,"* and this implies *activity*.

Oh, I would that some Christians would pay a little attention to their legs instead of paying it all to their heads. When children's heads grow too fast it is a sign of disease, and they get the rickets, or water on the brain. And there are some very sound Brethren, who seem to me to have got some kind of disease, and when they try to walk, they straightway make a tumble of it, because they have paid so much attention to perplexing Doctrinal views, instead of looking as they ought to have done, to the practical part of Christianity. By all means let us have Doctrine, but by all means let us have precepts too. By all means let us have inward experience, but by all means let us also have outward "holiness, without which no man can see the Lord." "We *walk."* This is more than some can say. They can affirm—"We talk; we think; we experience; we feel"—but true Christians can say, with the Apostle Paul, "We walk." Oh that we may always be able to say it too! Here, then, is the activity of the Christian life.

In the posture of walking there is also implied *progress*. A man does not walk unless he makes some headway. We are not always practicing the goose-step; we are not always lifting our foot, and then putting it down in the same place. This may do very well for the beginners in the awkward squad at drill, and I am afraid that a great many of us are still in that squad; but the Christian who has got through his childhood, and has grown somewhat, makes progress. There are some who will tell you that they do not know that they have made any progress, or, if they do not say this, you can see that they have made none. They are as bad-tempered as when they first joined the Church. They are as changing, as narrow-minded, as critical, as easily "carried about with every wind of doctrine" as they were at first. Such persons give some cause for suspicion as to whether they know much about the Divine Life at all, because they who have the Divine Life truly in them can say—"We walk." They go from strength to strength; every one of them appears in Zion before God. They are not satisfied with being in the Way; they desire also to walk in the Way. God does not say to us—"This is the Way," and then stop; but He says—"This is the Way, walk in it." We are always to be making advances; we are to be going from faith in its beginnings to faith in its perfections—from faith to assurance; from assurance to full assurance; from full assurance of hope to the full assurance of understanding; and thus onward, waxing stronger and stronger. There is a progress to be made in every Christian Grace; and he who carefully marks the terms used about Christian Graces will discover that there are

degrees in all of them, while each of them are degrees one above the other. Walking implies progress; and the genuine Christian, when he is in a healthy state, may truthfully say—"We walk."

Walking also implies *perseverance*. When a man goes along a step or two, and then stops, or returns, we do not call that walking. The motion of the planets, as seen by the eye have been described by the poet as "progressive, retrograde, and standing still." I am afraid there are many people of whom this would be a true description, but the true Christian keeps on; and though there may often appear to be times when he stops, and seasons when he goes back, yet the Scripture is not broken where it says that "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day." The Christian's motto is, "Upward and onward." Not as though he had already attained, either was already perfect, he presses forward to the mark for the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus. We are not true Christians if we stop, or start, or turn aside. As an arrow from a bow that is drawn by some mighty archer speeds straightway towards its goal, such is the Christian life as it is, and such is it as it always should be. We make progress, and we persevere in so doing.

I think, however, that by the term "walk" the Apostle meant to signify that, *in the ordinary and customary actions of life, we are actuated by faith.* You know walking is the common way of moving. You do not often talk of a child's walking. You do speak of it, of course; but you generally say, "There are the little ones running about the house." You do not say that they are "walking about the house," because the way of moving with the young is generally running, inasmuch as they have a great deal of extra energy, and have not yet got into the wear and tear of life. You do not find lambs walking at all in the ordinary way in which sheep do. Now, it is very easy, in the beginning of the Christian life, to run in the ways of the Lord with rejoicing; but running, after all, is not the most manly form of progress; it is not that which can be kept up for long, for running fatigues and tires you; but walking is that kind of progress in which a man continues hour after hour; and after his night's rest he rises again to walk on as before, until he reaches his goal. In Scripture we often read of men who, by faith, did great exploits. "By my God I have broken through a troop; by my God I will leap over a wall." Now this is a very great thing to do, and some Christians are always fixing their eyes upon exploits of faith. The Apostle Paul cut through troops and did leap over walls, but in this place he speaks of the common actions of life. It is as if he said—"I not only leap walls by faith, but I walk by faith; I not only break through troops by faith, but I go and do my business by faith."

That man has not yet learned the true spirit of Christianity who is always saying, "I can preach a sermon by faith." Yes, Sir, but can you make a coat by faith? "I can distribute tracts, and visit the district by faith." Can you cook a dinner by faith? I mean, can you perform the common actions of the household, and the daily duties which fall to your lot in the spirit of faith? This is what the Apostle means. He does not speak about running, or jumping, or fighting, but about walking; and he means to tell you that the ordinary life of a Christian is different from the

life of another man; that he has learned to introduce faith into everything he does. It was not a bad saying of one who said that he, "did eat and drink, and sleep eternal life." We want not a home-spun religion, but a religion that was spun in Heaven, and that will do to wear at home and about the house. "We *walk* by faith." The Muslim worships his god at the "holy hour," the true Christian calls all hours "holy," and worships always. Some set apart the seventh day of the week, and therein do well, but in setting apart all the seven days, and living to God, and entering into rest throughout them all, we do better still. When our souls cannot keep our religion for the Tabernacle, and the pew, and the closet, and the open Bible, and the bended knee; but when that religion becomes the atmosphere in which we live, the element in which our soul breathes, when God dwells in us, and we dwell in Him, when we feed upon Christ, not as a special dainty, but as "the Bread of Heaven," and drink of Him, not as a luxury, but as "the Water of Life," when we wear our piety, not as some holiday garment, but as our everyday dress, then it is that we get into the spirit of true religion.

Summing up all, then, the whole of the Christian life which is implied in the term "walk," is here spoken of, and it is influenced by the principle of faith which we are now about to speak.

II. And now, secondly, in the text we have TWO PRINCIPLES CONTRASTED.

There is *walking by faith*, and there is *walking by sight*.

The most of men, all men, indeed, naturally *walk by sight.* They have a proverb that, "Seeing is believing," and they are wise men, for they trust people as far as they can see them, and no further. The world thinks itself uncommonly knowing in always depending upon its own sight. The highest degree of worldly wisdom seems to be just this—see everything for yourself, and do not be taken in; do not be led by the nose by anybody, but follow your own understanding. This is the text which the world's Solomons always preach from—"Self-Made Men"—that is the title of their book; self-reliance—that is the name of their principle, and, according to the world, the best and grandest thing that a man can do is to have faith in *himself!* Their maxim is, "Know things for yourself; look after the main chance; Make money—make it honestly if you can, and honorably if possible, but, if not, *make it anyhow*, by hook or by crook." "Take care of Number One"—this is the world's learned *dictum*. Now the Christian is the very opposite of this. He says—"I do not care about looking after the things that are seen and are temporal; they are like dissolving views, or the scenes from a child's magic lantern; there is nothing in them; they are but phantoms and shadows; the things that are not seen influence me because they are eternal; they endure, remain, abide, and therefore they affect a creature which has learned that it has, not mortality alone, but immortality, and who expecting to live forever, therefore seeks for things which will be like his own existence."

Now, since the world thinks itself so very wise for holding everything it can, and thinks the Christian such a great fool for giving up what he can see for what he cannot see, in contradiction to the world's proverb, "A

bird in the hand is worth two in the bush"—let us see where the wisdom of this matter is, and where it is not.

In the first place, we notice that *walking by sight is a very childish thing.* Any child can walk by sight, and so can any fool too. We know how a child feels when it looks at a mountain, and we have all felt the same when we have gone to Switzerland and other places. I had a friend with me, who said of a certain mountain—"I will undertake to be at the top in half-an-hour." It took us five and a half hours steady toiling, and we did not go slowly either. Of course my friend judged by his sight, and not being accustomed to mountains, and not knowing that sight is a very different thing when it comes to deal with different landscapes—not knowing that a judgment which would be pretty accurate in England would be totally wrong in the mountains of Wales, and still more erroneous in Switzerland—not knowing all this, I dare say he would be startled at eventide, expecting to find himself at the top before the sun went down, whereas he would not have reached the mountain itself, till the middle of the night. A child always judges everything by what he sees. You give him a number of coins; they are all counterfeit, but he is so pleased with them, that he does not care about having real sovereigns; he is just as glad to have those he has, for they look quite as good. You offer him sixpence, and when he is yet a youngster he will give you your sixpence back for a penny, because the penny is the larger of the two coins. He judges by sight, which, you see, is a childish principle altogether. When a man grows up he no longer judges so much by sight. He has learned a great many things in this world, and he has discovered that his eyes may be very greatly mistaken at times.

The child says—"How quickly these stars move! How fast the moon hastens through the clouds!" The man says—"No, no; it is the clouds that are moving." The child says that the sun rises in the morning, and sets in the evening, and admires its motion; but the man knows that the sun does not move at all, and that it is the earth that is moving. He believes this, and thus in a certain degree he has faith because he cannot see the world move. Hodge once said he would not believe the world moved at all because he found that his house still stood in the same place, and Hodge proved himself to have been thus only a big child. But it is a very manly thing to believe something which you cannot see. Even in common philosophy it is so. The children all sat at home in England, and in Spain, and in France, and they said—"Oh, this is all the world, this is," and they had their Mediterranean Sea in the middle of the earth. But there was a man among them who said he did not believe it, but thought the world was round, and that there was another half to it. "You are a fool," they said. "Fool or not," he replied, "I believe it," and Columbus stood up, head and shoulders taller than the rest of his fellows, and got a few to go with him and started—a company of fools they were called. They could not see anything! They sailed on, and on, and on, for many weary days, and the unbelievers said they had better go back. There were several pieces of seaweed floating about which looked as if they came from some other shore, or had been washed down some not far distant river. Columbus did not care much for these seaweeds

because he believed, and believed firmly, that there was another half of the globe; and when the land birds came and lighted on his ship, though they gladdened his heart, yet they did not make him believe any the more. And when he saw America, and stood on the strand of the land of gold, he still only had to keep on as he had done. He had walked by faith before, and he could continue in the same course now. When he came back everybody said—"What a wonderful man is Columbus!" Just so; and all the rest were children, and he was the only true man among them.

Now the Christian is *a man;* I mean to say he is "a man" in the Scriptural sense of the term. He has become a full-grown man in Christ Jesus, and while the worldling says—"This is all the world; 'let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die,' let us make money and spend it, and enjoy ourselves, for this is the end of the world." "No," the Christian says, "No, there must be another half to the world; I am sure there must be another land beyond the sea, so I will loose my anchor, and turn my helm, and try to find it. I will leave this world to you children, and will seek another and a more heavenly one." So we sail away, and by-and-by we see the bits of seaweed, and when at last the angelic messengers come, like birds of Paradise, and light upon the masts of our vessels, then we thank God that we were ever enabled, with true manly courage, to loose our anchor, to set out upon our voyage, and to turn our helm towards the sea, because we believed in God, and were actuated by a noble principle of faith, compared with which the world's wisdom is but the folly of the child.

This, then, is the first thing we have to say about these two principles—that the one is childish while the other is manly.

Again, *the one is groveling while the other is noble*. I think the world must be pretty well ashamed of itself if it still considers this poor earth to be all that a soul has to live for. I feel as if I could not talk upon the matter. Solomon tried everything there was in this world—riches, power, pleasure— he had every sort of delicacy and delight even beyond the point of satisfaction—and what was his verdict upon it all? "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" A man earning his bread all day long—what is he? Is he better than the donkey that I saw a little while ago at Carisbrook Castle, pumping up water and always going round? What more is he than that? "Well, but he makes money and acquires houses and land." Yes, and there is only so much more probate tax to be paid when he dies, and I suppose the worms know no difference between a man who died worth 300,000 pounds and a poor wretch who was buried by the parish! It does not come to anything more than that! The children go to the seaside with their little wooden spades and build up a pier of sand, but the tide comes and washes it away, and this is just what men do. They build with heavier stuff, which gives them more care, and not half as much merriment in piling up as the youngsters have in digging up their sand. but the end is just the same; only the children live to build again, while these big children, these grovelers, are washed out to sea with all their works and perish everlastingly. You have walked upon the beach, I dare say, when the sea has gone down. I do not mean the beach at

Ramsgate where everybody goes, but a long way out in some quiet spot; if you have, you will have seen what hundreds of little mounds there are all over the beach, where the worms have come up and made a number of small heaps. That is all we do, and it is all that the world is—just a big place covered all over with little heaps of dirt that we have all piled up, but where have we gone?

If there is not another world to live for, I must say that this life is a most unutterably empty kind of thing. It is not worthy of a man! But oh, to believe what God tells me, that there is a God, that God became flesh to bear me up to Himself, to believe that I am God's son, that I have an immortality within myself which will outlast the stars, that I shall one day see His face, and sing His praise forever with cherubim and seraphim—why, there is *something* here. The man who believes this feels as if he begins to grow; he bursts the poor engrossments of his flesh, and expands into something worthy of a man who is made in the image of the Most High! The principle of seeing everything, and of liking only to get what I can see, and touch, and handle, is the poor instinct of beasts and birds, but the principle of living upon what I cannot see, and upon something that I can believe, is one worthy of a man. As much as man is higher than the beast, so much and yet more a thousand-fold is the life of faith superior to that of mere sight and feeling.

Again—there is something *exceedingly ignorant about believing only what I can see.* What, then, shall I believe? Even in common life the man who walks by sight must necessarily be a fool—I say necessarily, because nine out of ten things in the world that are the most wonderful and potent cannot be seen, at least not by the eyes. A man who will not believe in electricity—well, what can you make of him in these days? Such a man will believe in the vapor that puffs from the steam engine, but since nobody ever did or could see steam, inasmuch as it is an invisible agent, he cannot ever believe in that. He lives in the midst of a great world, and he cannot account for most things in it because he will not believe in anything beyond what he sees; and if he carries this principle out, the marvels of other countries, and the wonders of other ages are all shut out from his poor dull mind. And this is most decidedly the case with regard to spiritual things. If you only walk by sight, and only believe what you see, what do you believe? You believe that while you are living here it is a good thing to make the best you can of it, and that then you will die and be buried, and that will be the end of you! What a poor, miserable, ignorant belief this is! But when you believe in what God reveals, and come to walk by faith, how your information expands! Now, riddles are all solved, and the inexplicable is understood, and now you begin to comprehend things in a way which you never could have done had you walked only by sight. Now you can understand those trials and troubles that come to you; now you can understand the complexity of your nature, and the inward conflicts that you feel within you. You could never have done this on the principle of sight, but, believing what God says, you have got into a state in which you shall be educated and taught till you become wise, and able to have fellowship with the only wise God!

Let me say, again, that *walking by sight is such a very deceptive way of walking.* After all, the eyes do not see anything; it is the mind that sees through the eyes. The eyes in every man have some sort of defect in them—they need to be educated for a long time before they tell the truth; and even then there are a thousand things about which they do not always speak truly. The man who walks by his eyes will be deceived in many ways. The angler baits his hook, and casts his fly upon the water, and the silly fish, which jumps by sight, has the hook in its jaws in a moment. You can evermore, if you will, go from bad to worse in unseen danger if you will judge according to the sight of the eyes. The world is wise enough to say that, "Honesty is the best policy." The world was not quite itself when it said that, for mostly it is present gain that Satan sets before us, and present pleasure. "Snatch the hour as it passes," says Satan; "these things are sure; you do not know what may come afterwards." And so is the poor soul deceived by judging according to what he thinks he sees; whereas the man who has a God to go to, and to believe in, is never deceived. The promise to him always stands fast; the Person of Christ is always his sure refuge, and God Himself is his perpetual inheritance.

Let me add, again, that *the principle of sight is a very changeable one.* You can see well enough, you know, in the day, but what will you do in the night when you cannot see? It is well enough to talk of walking by sight in the light, but what will you do when the darkness comes on? It is very well to talk about living on time present while you are here, but when you go upstairs, and lie on your deathbed, what about the principle of living for the present then? When you cannot stay here any longer, when, notwithstanding all the ties which held you to earth, Death begins to drag you away and you cry to him—"Stop! I cannot leave wife, and children, and business just yet!" And when Death remorselessly tears you away from all that is dear to you—how about the principle of sight then? It is a strange principle to die with, but, let me say, on the other hand, that the principle of faith does best in the dark. He who walks by faith can walk in the sunlight as well as you can, for he walks with God-enlightened eyes, but he can walk in the dark as you cannot, for his light is still shining upon him. He trusts in the unseen and in the invisible, and his soul rejoices when present things are passing away.

We will not tarry longer upon this point except to say one thing, namely, *that those who walk by sight walk alone.* Walking by sight is just this—"I believe in myself." Whereas walking by faith is—"I believe in God." If I walk by sight I walk by myself. If I walk by faith then there are two of us, and the second One—ah, how great, how glorious, how mighty is He—the Great All-in-All—God All-Sufficient! Sight goes to war at its own charges, and becomes bankrupt and is defeated. Faith goes to war at the charges of the King's Exchequer, and there is no fear that Faith's bank shall ever be broken. Sight builds the house from its own quarry, and on its own foundation, but it begins to build and is never able to finish. And what it does build, rests on sand and falls. But Faith builds on the foundation laid in eternity—in the fair colors of the Savior's blood—in the Covenant of Grace! It goes to God for every stone to be

used in the building, and brings forth the top-stone with shouts of, "Grace, Divine Grace unto it." Beloved, when you say, "I will do so-and-so," you may be very proud, but when you can say, "God will do so-and-so, and I believe it," then you will be humble, and yet you may glory and boast as much as you will, because there are two of you together. It is not "the sword of Gideon," but, *"the sword of the Lord* and of Gideon," and Jehovah cannot be defeated. "The life that I live I live not, but Christ lives in me," and this is the grand advantage.

In living by sight you have to get your own wisdom, your own judgment, your own strength to guide you, and when you get into trouble you must be your own deliverer, and your own comforter, and your own helper, or else you must run to somebody as weak as yourselves who will only send you deeper down into the mire. But when you walk by faith, should there seem to be a mistake you have not made it; should anything seem to go wrong, you did not steer the ship; and if the ship should run aground, you are not answerable, and will not be blamed. It is yours to be watchful and careful, and to believe that all things work together for the good of those who love God, and are the called according to His purpose. But besides this, we know that nothing can go wrong while God is in the vessel. Blessed be God, when Christ is on Lake Gennesaret there may come a stormy night, but every vessel gets safely to port, and we can always sing—

"Begone unbelief, my Savior is near,
And for my relief will surely appear.
By faith let me wrestle, and He will perform,
With Christ in the vessel I smile at the storm."

III. And now, having contrasted the two principles, I am about to close by noticing THE CAUTION IMPLIED in the text.

The Apostle says positively, "We walk by faith," and then he adds negatively, "not by sight." The caution, then, is—NEVER MIX THE TWO PRINCIPLES.

Some of you will not know what I am talking about, but I will try to make you understand it. Some of you are actuated in what you do by something that you can see. You can see your children, and you will work for them; you can see money—you will strive for that; you can see such-and-such temporal good—you will seek after that. But the Christian believes in God, and he lives to God. He lives as if there were a God, but you live as if there were no God. He believes in a hereafter, and you say you do; but you live as if there were no hereafter, while the Christian lives as if there was one. He believes in sin, and you say you do, and yet you never weep about it; while the Christian lives as if sin were a real disease, and he could not bear it. You say you believe in Christ the Savior, but you live as if you did not believe in Him. The Christian lives upon his belief that there is a Savior. All that he does is affected and acted upon not by what he sees, but by what he does not see and yet believes, and he walks according to that faith.

Now, the thing that neither you nor I can understand is this; how is it that the man who has once learned to walk by faith can be so stupid as ever to mix the two principles together? You may go on a journey by land, or you may go by water, but to try to swim and walk at the same

time would be rather stupid. A drunken man tries to walk on both sides of the street at once—and there is a sort of intoxication that sometimes seizes upon Christians which makes them also try to walk by two principles. They cannot do it; it is like trying to go due east and due west at the same time. The principles themselves are antagonistic to one another, and yet there are some Christians who attempt it.

Shall I show you what I mean by this? You say—"I believe God loves me; I have prospered in business ever since I have been a Christian." Yes; the first part of that is faith; but the second part of it is sight. Suppose you had not prospered in business, what then? Why, according to your way of reasoning, you would have said—"I do not believe that God loves me, for I have not prospered in business since I have been a Christian." So, you see, you would really be walking by sight. Genuine Christian reasoning is this—"I have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ; He says that as many as receive Him are the sons of God; I have received Him, and I am therefore a son of God. Now, whether my Father kisses me or flogs me, I know that I am His son; I am not going to be guided by my state and condition, but by my faith as to the promise of the Word. He says that if I have received Christ, I have the privilege to be a child of God; then, whether I am rich or poor—whether I am sick or healthy—all these are matters of sight. I do not bring them into the calculation; I take the naked Word of God as it stands—that I am God's child. If He slays me, I am His child; If He lets me go to prison, if He should allow me to rot in a dungeon, or to burn at the stake, I am still His child; I do not look upon circumstances as at all affecting my position." Oh Beloved, if you once begin calculating your position before God according to your temporal circumstances, where will you be? Do not talk any more of believing—you have given it up, and you are really walking by sight.

Perhaps many of you do not make precisely this mistake, but there is another way of doing it. "Now," says one, "I have believed in Jesus Christ, but I am afraid I am not saved, for I feel tonight so depressed in spirits, and so unhappy." "Oh," says another, "you need not tell me that I have trusted in Jesus Christ, for I am sure I am saved, because I feel so happy." Now you are both wrong, as wrong as wrong can be. When you said you trusted in Christ—so far, so good; but when you said you were afraid you were not saved because you were so *unhappy*, or, on the other hand, that you were sure you were saved because you were so *happy*—that, also, is walking by sight. You see you are mixing up the two principles which will no more go together than fire and water. If I have believed in Jesus Christ, I may at this moment, through disease of body or some other present temporal affliction, be very heavy in spirit—but I am saved notwithstanding. "He who believes on Him is not condemned." I may be very troubled; I may see a great deal in myself that may make me distressed—but if I believe, I am not condemned, and cannot be. Or, if I have strong faith and am possessed of great joy, that is no proof of my being saved; it is my believing that is the proof of that. I do not hang upon my feelings—I rely simply upon Christ. I must learn the difference between feeling and believing, or else I shall always be blundering and making mistakes. You sometimes get taken by the Lord to the

mountaintop, and you have such sweet communion with Him, and then you say—"My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved." Ah, poor Simpleton, you do not know what you are saying, for in a short time you may go down into the depths and cry—"All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me." You think that God has forgotten to be gracious, and you begin to write bitter things against yourself—whereas that is the very time to "have faith in God"—

"When we in darkness walk,
Nor feel the heavenly flame,
Then is the time to trust the Lord,
And wait upon His name."

You think that you will use your candle in the daytime, but candles were made for the night. Faith is not meant for sweet frames and feelings only—it is meant for dark frames and horrible feelings. Do you think that the minister has no changes? If he had no changes within, he would know himself to be a Moabite and not an Israelite, for it is Moab that is settled on his lees! What, then, is the way to maintain peace when there are changes within the soul? How can we be peaceful when we are sometimes taken up to Heaven, and are another time cast down? Why, the only way is never to be unduly elated by prosperity without or within, and never to be unduly depressed by adversity or by doubts and fears. We must learn to live neither upon things without, nor upon things within, but upon things above which are the true food for a new-born spirit. What is your title for Heaven, Christian? Every evidence will one day be taken from you except that which is comprised in these three words: "It is written." The genuine foundation upon which I may rest for salvation is this: "God has said it." It is not, "I have experienced it," for there will often be times when I shall be afraid that my experience is a delusion. But if "God has said it," we can never be afraid. On the oath and Covenant of the Most High we must, every one of us, come and build. If we do that, all shall be well with us. But this is a work so far above human nature that human nature does not even understand it, and though I have tried to speak very plainly, I am conscious that I have spoken in riddles to many of you. God Himself must open the eyes to understand what living faith means, and then He must *give* that living faith and *perpetuate* it; or else, as Israel went back in their hearts to Egypt, so shall we go back to the garlic and onions of the things that are seen, and have but little of the manna which comes from an unseen Heaven.

And now, in closing, I would affectionately bid you take heed of one thing. *You must be sure if you walk by faith, that you walk by the right faith.* I mean you must be sure that it is faith in Jesus Christ. If you put faith in your dreams, as some of you still do, or in anything you thought you saw when you were walking, or in a voice you thought you heard from the clouds, or in texts of Scripture coming to your mind—if you put faith in anything else but Christ—I do not care how good it may be or how bad it may be—you must beware, for such a faith as that will give way. You may have a very strong faith in everything else but Christ, and perish! There was an architect who had a plan for building a lighthouse on the Eddystone Rock. He was quite satisfied, and as he sat by the fire

looking at his plans, he was quite sure that no storm that ever came could shake the building. He applied for the contract to build the lighthouse, and did build it, and a very singular-looking place it was. There were a great many flags about it, and ornaments, and it looked very promising. Some shook their heads a little, but he was very, very firm, and said he should like to be in it himself in the worst wind that ever blew. He was in it at the time he wanted to be, and he was never heard of again—nor was anything more ever seen of his lighthouse. The whole thing was swept away. He was a man of great faith, only it happened to be founded on mistaken principles.

Now sometimes, because there is a way of talking which looks very much like assurance, you may say, "I am not afraid; I never had a doubt or a fear; I know it is all right with my soul; I am not afraid of the test of the Day of Judgment." Well, whether you wish it or not, that test for the labor of your lighthouse will come, and if it should prove that you built it yourself, it will be swept away—and you with it. But if your soul takes God's Word, and reading that Word, believes it, and is willing to be taught its inward meaning—if you take that Word as it stands, and rest upon it, and act upon it with all your heart and soul—the worst storm that ever blew shall never shake your rock and refuge, nor you, either! And you shall be safe when earth's old columns bow, and all her wheels shall go to wreck and confusion.

Rest in the Lord Jehovah! Depend on the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ for all that you need! Rest wholly in Him with the whole weight of your soul and spirit, and then there shall be no fear that what you shall see is God's face with acceptance! May God teach us faith on the right principle, and may we walk by it, and not by sight, and then the Lord shall give us that reward which is given to those who walk by faith in the living God!

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DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 25, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when He was come near, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest! And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, Master, rebuke Your disciples. But He answered and said unto them, I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."
Luke 19:37-40.

THE Savior was "a Man of Sorrows," but every thoughtful mind has discovered the fact that down deep in His innermost soul He must have carried an inexhaustible treasury of refined and heavenly joy. I suppose that of all the human race there was never a Man who had a deeper, purer, or more abiding peace than our Lord Jesus Christ. "He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows." Benevolence is joy. The highest benevolence must from the very nature of things have afforded the deepest possible delight. To be engaged in the most blessed of all errands, to foresee the marvelous results of His labors in time and in eternity, and even to see around Him the fruits of the good which He had done in the healing of the sick and the raising of the dead, must have given to such a sympathetic heart as that which beat within the bosom of the Lord Jesus Christ much of secret satisfaction and joy. There were a few remarkable seasons when this joy manifested itself. "At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth." Christ had His songs though it was night with Him; and though His face was marred and His Countenance had lost the luster of earthly happiness, yet sometimes it was lit up with a matchless splendor of unparalleled satisfaction, as He thought upon the recompense of the reward, and in the midst of the congregation sang His praise unto God.

In this, the Lord Jesus is a blessed picture of His Church on earth. This is the day of Zion's trouble—at this hour the Church expects to walk in sympathy with her Lord along a thorny road. She is outside the camp—through much tribulation she is forcing her way to the crown. She expects to meet with reproaches. To bear the cross is her office, and to be scorned and counted an alien by her mother's children is her lot. And yet the Church has a deep well of joy of which none can drink but her own children. There are stores of wine, and oil, and corn hidden in the midst of our Jerusalem upon which the saints of God are evermore sustained and nurtured; and sometimes, as in our Savior's case, we have

our seasons of intense delight for "there is a river, the streams which make glad the city of our God." Exiles though we are, we rejoice in our King, yes, in Him we exceedingly rejoice, while in His name we set up our banners.

This is a season with us as a Church when we are peculiarly called upon to rejoice in God. The Lord Jesus, in the narrative before us, was going to Jerusalem, as His disciples fondly hoped, to take the throne of David and set up the long-expected Kingdom. Well might they shout for joy, for the Lord was in their midst, in their midst in state, riding amidst the acclamations of a multitude who had been glad partakers of His goodness. Jesus Christ is in our midst today—the Kingdom is securely His. We see the crown glittering upon His brow; He has been riding through our streets, healing our blind, raising our dead, and speaking words of comfort to our mourners. We, too, attend Him in state today, and the acclamations of little children are not lacking, for from our Sunday school there have come songs of converted youngsters who sing gladly, as did the children of Jerusalem in days of yore, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

I want, dear Friends, this morning, to stir up in all of us the spirit of holy joy because our King is in our midst; that we may welcome Him and rejoice in Him, and that while He is working His mighty deeds of salvation throughout this congregation so graciously, He may not lack such music as our feeble lips can afford Him. I shall therefore invite your attention to these four verses by way of example, that we may take a pattern for our praise from this Inspired description. We shall observe four things—first, *delightful praise;* secondly, *appropriate song;* thirdly, *intrusive objections;* and fourthly, *an unanswerable argument.*

I. First, we shall observe here DELIGHTFUL PRAISE.

In the 37th verse every word is significant, and deserves the careful notice of all who would learn aright the lesson of how to magnify the Savior. To begin with, the praise rendered to Christ was *speedy* praise. The happy choristers did not wait till He had entered the city, but "when He was come near, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, they began to rejoice." It is well to have a quick eye to perceive occasions for gratitude. Blind Unbelief and blear-eyed Thanklessness allow the favors of God to be forgotten in ingratitude, and, without praises, die; they walk in the noonday of Mercy and see no light to sing by; but a believing, cheerful, grateful spirit detects at once the rising of the Sun of Mercy and begins to sing, even at the break of day, Christian, if you would sing of the mercy you have already, you would soon have more; if twilight made you glad, you should soon have the bliss of noon. I am certain that the Church in these days has lost much by not being thankful for little. We have had many Prayer Meetings, but few, very few, Praise Meetings—as if the Church could cry loud enough when her own ends were to be answered—but was dumb as to music for her Lord. Her King acts to her very much as He did with the man with the pound; that man put not out the pound to interest, and therefore it was taken away. We have not thanked Him for little mercies, and therefore even these have been

removed, and Churches have become barren and deserted by the Spirit of God. Let us lift up the voice of praise to our Master because He has blessed us these 12 years; we have had a continual stream of revival; the cries of sinners have sounded in our ears—every day we have seen souls converted—I was about to say almost every hour of the week, and that by the space of' these 12 years, and of late, we have had a double portion! Benjamin's mess has been set near our place at the table; we have been made to feast on royal dainties, and have been filled with bread even to the full. Shall we not then praise God? Ah, let us not require twice telling of it, but let our souls begin to praise Him, even now, that He comes near unto Jerusalem.

It strikes us at once, also, that this was *unanimous praise*. Observe, not only the multitude, but the *whole multitude* of the disciples rejoiced and praised Him; not one silent tongue among the disciples—not one who withheld his song. And yet, I suppose, those disciples had their trials as we have ours. There might have been a sick wife at home, or a child withering with disease; they were doubtless poor—we know they were—and poverty is never without its pinches. They were men of like passions with ourselves; they had to struggle with inbred sin, and with temptation, and yet there seems to have been no one who on those grounds excluded himself from the choir of singers on that happy day! Oh, my Soul, whatever you have about you which might bow you down, be glad when you remember that Jesus Christ is glorified in the midst of His Church. Why, my Brother, is that harp of yours hanging on the willows? Have you nothing to sing about? Has He done nothing for you? Why, if you have no personal reason for blessing God, then lend us your heart and voice to help *us,* for we have more praise-work on hand than we can get through alone—we have more to praise Him for than we are able to discharge without extra aid. Our work of praise is too great for us, come and help us; sing on our behalf, if you cannot on your own, and then, perhaps, you will catch the flame, and find something after all for which you, too, must bless Him.

I know there are some of you who do not feel as if you could praise God this morning; let us ask the Master to put your harp in tune. Oh be not silent! Be not silent! Bless Him! If you cannot bless Him for temporals, bless Him for spirituals; and if you have not of late experimentally enjoyed many of these, then bless Him for what He is. Bless Him for that dear face covered with the bloody sweat—for those pierced hands, for that opened side will you not praise Him? Why, surely, if He had not died for me, I must still love Him, to think of His goodness in dying for others. His kindness, the generosity of His noble heart in dying for His enemies might well provoke the most unbelieving to a song. I am, therefore, not content unless all of you will contribute your note. I would have every bird throw in its note, though some cannot imitate the lark or nightingale; yes, I would have every tree of the forest clap its hands, and even the hyssop on the wall wave in adoration. Come, Beloved, cheer up. Let dull care and dark fear be gone. Up with harps

and down with doubts. It must be praise from "the whole multitude." The praise must be unanimous—not one chord out of order to spoil the tune.

Next, it was *multitudinous*. "The whole multitude." There is something most inspiriting and exhilarating in the noise of a multitude singing God's praises. Sometimes, when we have been in good tune, and have sung "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," our music has rolled upward like thunder to yon dome, and has reverberated peal on peal, and these have been the happiest moments some of us have ever known, when every tongue was praise, and every heart was joy. Oh, let us renew those happy times! Let us anticipate the season when the dwellers in the East and in the West, in the North and in the South, of every age and of every clime shall assemble on the celestial hilltops, and swell the everlasting song extolling Jesus Lord of All. Jesus loves the praise of man; He loves to hear the voices of all the blood-washed—

"Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their joys are one."

We are not so many as that, but we are counted by thousands, so let us praise His name—the whole multitude!

Still it is worthy of observation that while the praise was multitudinous, it was quite *select*. It was the whole multitude *"of the disciples."* The Pharisees did not praise Him—they were murmuring. All true praise must come from true hearts; if you do not learn of Christ, you cannot render to Him acceptable song. These disciples, of course, were of different sorts; some of them had but just enlisted in the army—just learned to sit at His feet; some had worked miracles in His name, and, having been called to the Apostolic office, had preached the Word to others, but they were all disciples. I trust that in this congregation there is a vast majority of disciples—well, then, all of you, you who have lately come into His school, you who have long been in it, you who have become fathers in Israel, and are teaching others, the whole multitude of disciples, I hope, will praise God! I could wish—God grant the wish—I could wish that those who are not disciples might soon become so. "Take My yoke upon you," He said, "and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." A disciple is a learner. You may not know much, but you need not know anything in coming to Christ. Christ begins with ignorance and bestows wisdom. If you do but know that you know nothing, you know enough to become a disciple of Christ Jesus. There is no matriculation necessary in order to enter into Christ's college; He takes the fools and makes them know the wonders of His dying love. Oh that you may become a disciple! "Write my name down, Sir," you say to the writer with the inkhorn by his side, and be you from now on a humble follower of the Lamb. Now, though I would not have those who are not disciples close their mouths whenever others sing, yet I do think there are some hymns in which they would behave more honestly if they did not join—for there are some expressions which hardly ought to come from unconverted lips. Better far would it be if they would pray, "Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise." You may have a very sweet voice, my Friend, and may sing with admirable taste and in exquisite harmony

any of the parts, but God does not accept the praise where the heart is absent. The best tune in the book is one called *Hearts*. The whole multitude of the disciples whom Jesus loves are the proper persons to extol the Redeemer's name. May you, dear Hearer, be among that company!

Then, in the next place, you will observe that the praise they rendered was *joyful praise*. "The whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice." I hope the Doctrine that Christians ought to be gloomy will soon be driven out of the universe. There are no people in the world who have such a right to be happy, nor have such cause to be joyful as the saints of the living God. All Christian duties should be done joyfully—and especially the work of praising the Lord. I have been in congregations where the tune was dolorous to the very last degree—where the time was so dreadfully slow that one wondered whether they would ever be able to sing through the 119th Psalm—whether, to use Watts's expression, eternity would not be too short for them to get through it. And altogether the spirit of the people has seemed to be so damp, so heavy, so dead, that we might have supposed that they were met to prepare their minds for hanging rather than for blessing the ever-gracious God. Why, Brothers and Sisters, true praise sets the heart ringing its bells, and hanging out its streamers. Never hang your flag at half-mast when you praise God; no, run up every color, let every banner wave in the breeze, and let all the powers and passions of your spirit exult and rejoice in God your Savior! They *rejoiced*. We are really most horribly afraid of being too happy. Some Christians think cheerfulness a very dangerous folly, if not a ruinous vice. That joyous Hundredth Psalm has been altered in all the English versions—

"All people who on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice,
Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell,
Come you before Him and rejoice."

"Him serve with *fear*," says the English version; but the Scotch version has less thistle and far more rose in it. Listen to it, and catch its holy happiness—

"Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell;
Come you before Him and rejoice."

How do God's creatures serve Him out of doors? The birds do not sit on a Sunday with folded wings, dolefully silent on the boughs of the trees, but they sing as sweetly as may be, even though the raindrops fall. As for the new-born lambs in the field—they skip to His praise, though the season is damp and cold. Heaven and earth are lit up with gladness, and why not the hearts and houses of the saints? "Him serve with mirth." Well said the Psalmist—"before Him exceedingly rejoice." It was *joyful* praise.

The next point we must mention is that it was *demonstrative* praise. They praised Him with their voices, and with a *loud* voice. Propriety very greatly objects to the praise which is rendered by Primitive Methodists at times; their shouts and hallelujahs are thought by some delicate minds to be very shocking. I would not, however, join in the censure, lest I should be numbered among the Pharisees who said, "Master, rebuke

Your disciples." I wish more people were as earnest and even as vehement as the Methodists *used to be*. In our Lord's day we see that the people expressed the joy which they felt; I am not sure that they expressed it in the most harmonious manner, but at any rate they expressed it in a hearty, lusty shout. They altogether praised with a *loud* voice. It is said of Mr. Rowland Hill that, on one occasion someone sat on the pulpit stairs who sang in his ears with such a sharp shrill voice, that he could endure it no longer, and said to the good woman, "I wish you would be quiet." She answered, "It comes from my heart." "Oh," he said, pray forgive me—sing away! Sing as loudly as you will!" And truly, dear Friends, though one might wish there were more melody in it, yet if your music comes from the heart, we cannot object to the loudness, or we might be found objecting to that which the Savior could not and would not blame. Must we not be loud? Do you wonder that we speak out? Have not His mercies a loud tongue? Do not His kindnesses deserve to be proclaimed aloud? Were not the cries upon the Cross so loud that the very rocks were rent thereby—and shall our music be a whisper? No, as Watts declares, we would—

"Loud as His thunders shout His praise,
And sound it lofty as His Throne."

If not with loud voices actually in sound, yet we would make the praise of God loud by our actions, which speak louder than any words; we would extol Him by great deeds of kindness, and love, and self-denial, and zeal so that our actions may assist our words. "The whole multitude praised Him with a loud voice." Let me ask every Christian here to do something in the praise of God, to speak in some way for his Master. I would say, speak today; if you cannot with your voice, speak by act and deed, but join in the hearty shout of all the saints of God while you praise and bless the name of our ever gracious Lord.

The praise rendered, though very demonstrative, was very *reasonable;* the reason is given—"for all the mighty works that they had seen." My dear Friends, we have seen many mighty works which Christ has done. I do not know what these disciples had seen. Certain it is that after Christ entered into Jerusalem He was generous with His miracles. The blind were healed, the deaf had their ears opened, many of those possessed with devils were delivered, and incurable diseases gave way at His Word. I think we have the like reason in a spiritual sense. What has God worked? It has been marvelous—as our Elders would tell you, if they could recount what God has done—the many who have come forward during the last fortnight to tell what God has done for their souls. The Holy Spirit has met with some whom up to now no ministry had reached; some have been convicted of sin who were wrapped up in self-righteous rags; others have been comforted whose desponding hearts drew near unto despair. I am sure those Brothers who sat to see enquirers must have been astonished when they found some hundreds coming to talk about the things that make for their peace. It was blessed work, I doubt not, for them. They, therefore, would lead the strain, but you have all in your measure seen something of it. During the meetings we have held,

we have enjoyed an overpowering sense of the Divine Presence. Without excitement there has been a holy bowing of spirit, and yet a blessed lifting up of hope, and joy, and holy fervor. The Master has cast sweet smiles upon His Church; He has come near to His beloved; He has given her the tokens of His affection, and made her to rejoice with joy unspeakable! Any joy which we have towards Christ, then, will be reasonable enough, for we have seen His mighty works.

With another remark I shall close this first head—the reason for their joy was a *personal* one. There is no praise to God as sweet as that which flows from the man who has tasted that the Lord is gracious. Some of you have been converted during the last two or three months. Oh, you *must* bless Him, you must take the front rank now and bless His name for the mighty work which you have seen in yourself! The things which once were dear to you, you now abhor, and those things which seemed dry and empty, are now sweet and full of savor. God has turned your darkness into light! He has brought you up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and has set your feet upon a rock! Shall not your established goings yield Him a grateful song? You shall bless Him. Others here present have had their own children saved. God has looked on one family and another, and taken one, and two, and three. He has been pleased to lay His hand upon the Elders among us, and bless their families. Oh sing unto His name! Sing praises for the mighty works which we have seen.

This will be commonplace talk enough to those of you who have not seen it, but those who have, will feel the tears starting to their eyes as they think of son and daughter of whom they can say, "Behold, he prays!" Saints of God, I wish I could snatch a firebrand from the altar of praise that burns before the great Throne of God—I wish I could fire your hearts with it, but it is the Master's work to do it. Oh, may He do it now; may every one of you feel as if you could cast your crown at His feet, as if you could sing like the cherubim and the seraphim, nor yield even the first place of gratitude to the brightest spirit before the Eternal Throne. This morning may it be truly said, "The whole multitude of the disciples rejoiced with a loud voice for all the mighty things which they had seen."—

"O come, loud anthems let us sing,
Loud thanks to our Almighty King;
For we our voices high should raise,
When our salvation's Rock we praise.
Into His Presence let us haste,
To thank Him for His favors past;
To Him address, in joyful songs,
The praise that to His name belongs."

II. I shall now lead you on to the second point—their praise found vent for itself in AN APPROPRIATE SONG. "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest!" It was an appropriate song, if you will remember that *it had Christ for its Subject!* "My heart is writing of a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king." No song is so sweet from believing lips

as that which tells of Him who loved us, and who gave Himself for us. This particular song sings of Christ in His Character of King—a right royal song, then—a melody fit for a coronation day. Crown Him! Crown Him Lord of All! That was the refrain. "Blessed be the King." It sang of that King as commissioned by the Most High, "who comes in the name of the Lord." Think of Christ as bearing Divine Authority, as coming down to men in God our Father's name—as speaking what He has heard in Heaven, fulfilling no self-espoused errand, but a mission upon which the Divine Father sent Him according to His purpose and decree; all this is matter for music! Oh bless the Lord, you saints, as you remember that your Savior is the Lord's Anointed—He has set Him on His Throne; He Jehovah, who was pleased to bruise Him, has said, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." See the Godhead of your Savior. He whom you adore, the Son of Mary, is the Son of God! He who did ride upon a colt, the foal of an ass, did also ride upon a cherub, and did fly—yes, He rode upon the wings of the wind! They spread their garments in the way, and broke down branches; it was a humble triumph, but long before this the angels had strewn His path with adoring songs. Before Him went the lightning, coals of fire were in His track, and up from His Throne went forth hailstones and coals of fire! Blessed be the King! Oh praise Him this day! Praise the King, Divine and commissioned of His Father!

The burden of their song was, however, of Christ *present in their midst.* I do not think they would have rejoiced so loudly and sweetly if He had not been there. That was the source and center of their mirth—the King riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass—the King triumphant. They could not but be glad when He revealed Himself. Beloved, our King is here. We sang at the beginning of this visitation, "Arise, O King of Grace, arise, and enter to Your rest!" You remember our singing the verse—

"O You that are the Mighty One,
Your sword gird on Your thigh."

And King Jesus has done so in state—He has ridden prosperously, and out of the ivory palaces His heart has been made glad; and the King's daughter, all-glorious within, standing at His right hand, cannot but be glad, too. Loud to His praise wake every string of your heart, and let your souls make the Lord Jesus the burden of their song.

This was an appropriate song, in the next place, because it had *God for its object*. They extolled God, God in Christ, when they thus lifted up their voices. They said, "Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest." When we extol Christ, we desire to bless the Infinite Majesty who gave Christ to us. Thanks be unto the Father for His unspeakable gift! O Eternal God, we, Your creatures in this little world do unfeignedly bless You for Your great purpose and decree by which You did choose us to be illustrious exhibitions of Your majesty and love. We bless You that You did give us Grace in Christ Your Son before the starry sky was spread abroad. We praise You, O God, and magnify Your name as we inquire, "What is man, that You are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you visit him?" How could You deign to stoop from all the Glory of Your Infinity to be made

Man, to suffer, to bleed, to die for us? "Give unto the Lord, O you mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto His name." Oh that I could give place to some Inspired bard, some Seer of old, who, standing before you with mouth streaming with holy eloquence, should extol Him that lives, but once was slain, and bless the God who sent Him here below that He might redeem unto Himself a people who should show forth His praise!

I think this song to have been very appropriate for another reason, namely, because *it had the universe for its scope.* It was not praise within walls as ours this morning; the multitude sung in the open air with no walls but the horizon, with no roof but the arch of Heaven. Their song, though it was from Heaven, did not stay there, but enclosed the world within its range. It was, "Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest!" It is very singularly like that song of the angels, that Christmas carol of the spirits from on high when Christ was born—but it differs, for the angels' song was, "Peace on earth," and this at the gates of Jerusalem was, "Peace in Heaven." It is the nature of song to spread itself. From Heaven the sacred joy began when angels sang, and then the fire blazed down to earth in the words, "Peace on earth." But now the song began on *earth*, and so it blazed *up* to Heaven with the words, "Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest!" Is it not a wonderful thing that a company of poor beings like we here below can really affect the highest heavens? Every throb of gratitude which heaves our hearts glows through Heaven. God can receive no actual increase of Glory from His creature, for He has Infinite Glory and Majesty, but yet the creature manifests that Glory. A grateful man here below, when his heart is all on fire with sacred love, warms Heaven itself. The multitude sung of peace in Heaven as though the angels were established in their peaceful seats by the Savior—as though the war which God had waged with sin was now over because the conquering King was come. Oh let us seek after music which shall be fitted for other spheres! I would begin the music here, and so my soul should rise. Oh for some heavenly notes to bear my passions to the skies! It was appropriate to the occasion because the universe was its sphere.

And it seems also to have been most appropriate, because it had *gratitude for its spirit.* They cried aloud, *"Blessed"*—Blessed is the King." We cannot bless God, and yet we do bless Him in the sense in which He blesses us. Our goodness cannot extend to Him, but we reflect the blessedness which streams from Him as light from the sun. Blessed be Jesus! My Brothers and Sisters, have you never wished to make Him happier? Have you not wished that you could extol Him? Let Him be exalted! Let Him sit on high! I have almost wished, even selfishly, that He were not as glorious as He is, so that we might help to lift Him higher. Oh, if the crushing of my body, soul, and spirit would make Him one atom more glorious, I would not only consent to the sacrifice, but bless His name that He counted me worthy to do so. All that we can do brings nothing to Him. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, I would that He had His own. Oh that He rode over our great land in triumph! Would that King Jesus were as well known here now as He was once in Puritan times! Would

that Scotland were as loyal to Him as in Covenanting periods! Would that Jesus had His Majesty visible in the eyes of all men! We pray for this, we seek this; and among the chief joys our most chief joy is to know that God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. We have thus said something about the appropriateness of the song; may you, each of you, light upon such hymns as will serve to set forth your own case, and show forth the mercy of God in saving *you.* Do not be slack in praising Him in such notes as may be most suitable to your own condition.

III. Thirdly, and very briefly—for I am not going to give much time to these men—we have INTRUSIVE OBJECTIONS. "Master, rebuke Your disciples." We know that voice—the old grunt of the Pharisee. What could he do otherwise? Such is the man, and such must his communications be. While he can dare to boast, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are," he is not likely to join in praises such as other men lift up to Heaven.

But why did these Pharisees object? I suppose it was first of all because *they thought there would be no praise for themselves!* If the multitude had been saying, "Oh these blessed Pharisees! These excellent Pharisees! What broad phylacteries! What admirable hems to their garments! How diligently and scrupulously they tithe their mint, and their anise, and their cumin! What a wonder that God should permit us, poor vile creatures, to look upon these super-excellent incarnations of virtue," I will be bound to say there would not have been a man among them who would have said, "Master, rebuke Your disciples." A proud heart never praises God, for it hoards up praise for itself.

In the next place, *they were jealous of the people.* They did not feel so happy themselves, and they could not bear that other people should be glad. They were like the elder brother who said, "Yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." Was that a reason why nobody else should be merry? A very ill reason, truly. Oh, if we cannot rejoice, ourselves, let us stand out of the way of other people. If we have no music in our own hearts, let us not wish to stop those who have.

But I think the main point was that they were *jealous of Jesus;* they did not like to have Christ crowned with majesty. Certainly this is the drift of the human heart. It does not wish to see Jesus Christ extolled. Preach up morality or dry Doctrine, or ceremonies, and many will be glad to hear your notes; but preach up Jesus Christ, and some will say, "Master, rebuke your disciples!" It was not ill advice of an old preacher to a young beginner when he said, "Preach nothing down but sin, and preach nothing up but Christ." Brothers, let us praise nothing up but Christ! Have nothing to say about your Church, say nothing about your denomination, hold your tongue about the minister, but praise Christ—and I know the Pharisees will not like it. But that is an excellent reason to give them more of it, for that which Satan does not admire, he ought to have more of. The preaching of Christ is the whip that flogs the devil; the preaching of Christ is the thunderbolt, the sound of which makes all

Hell shake. Let us never be silent! We shall put to confusion all our foes if we do but extol Christ Jesus the Lord. "Master, rebuke Your disciples!"

Well, there is not much of this for Jesus Christ to rebuke in the Christian Church in the present day. There used to be—there used to be a little of what the world calls fanaticism. A consecrated cobbler once set forth to preach the Gospel in India. There were men who would go preaching the Gospel among the heathen, counting not their lives dear unto them. The day was when the Church was so foolish as to fling away precious lives for Christ's Glory! Ah, she is more prudent nowadays. Alas! Alas for your prudence! She is so calm and so quiet—no Methodist's zeal, now! Even that denomination which did seem alive has become most proper and most cold. And we are so charitable, too. We let the most abominable Doctrines be preached, and we put our finger on our lips, and say, "There's so many good people who think so." Nothing is to be rebuked nowadays. Brothers and Sisters, one's soul is sick of this! Oh, for the old fire again! The Church will never prosper till it comes once more. Oh, for the old fanaticism, for that, indeed, was the Spirit of God making men's spirits in earnest! Oh, for the old doing and daring that risked everything, and cared for nothing except to glorify Him who shed His blood upon the Cross! May we live to see such bright and holy days again! The world may murmur, but Christ will not rebuke.

IV. We come now to the last point, which is this—AN UNANSWERABLE ARGUMENT. He said, "If these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out."

Brothers and Sisters, I think that is very much our case. If we were not to praise God, the very stones might cry out against us. We *MUST* praise the Lord. Woe unto us if we do not. It is impossible for us to hold our tongues. Saved from Hell and be silent? Secure of Heaven and be ungrateful? Bought with precious blood and hold our tongues? Filled with the Spirit and not speak? Restrain from fear of feeble man with the Spirit's course within our souls? God forbid! In the name of the Most High, let such a thought be given to the winds. What, our children are saved; the offspring of our loins brought to Christ! What, see them springing up like willows by the water courses, and no awakening of song, no gladness, no delight! Oh, then we were worse than brutes, and our hearts would have been steeled and become as adamant. We must praise God! What, the King in our midst, King Jesus smiling into our souls, feasting us at His table, making His Word precious to us, and not praise Him. Why if Satan could know the delight of Christ's company, he might begin to love—but we, we were worse than devils if we did not praise the name of Jesus! What? The King's arm made bare, His enemies subdued, His triumphant chariot rolling through our streets, and no song! Oh Zion, if we forget to sing, let our right hand forget her cunning if we count not the King's triumph above our chief joy. What? The King coming! His Advent drawing near, the signs of blessing in the sky and air abound, and yet no song! Oh, we must bless Him! Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!

But could the stones ever cry out? Yes, they could, and if they were to speak, they would have much to talk of even as we have this day. If the stones were to speak they could tell of their *Maker;* and shall not we tell of Him who made us anew, and out of stones raised up children unto Abraham? They could speak of ages long since gone; the old rocks could tell of chaos and order, and the handiwork of God in various stages of Creation's drama; and cannot we talk of God's decrees, of God's great work in ancient times, and all that He did for His Church? If the stones were to speak they could tell of their *Breaker*, how He took them from the quarry, and made them fit for the Temple; and cannot we tell of our Creator and Maker, who broke our hearts with the hammer of His Word that He might build us into His temple? If the stones were to speak they would tell of their Builder who polished them and fashioned them after the similitude of a palace; and shall not we talk of our Architect and Builder who has put us in our place in the Temple of the Living God? Oh, if the stones could speak they might have a long, long story to tell by way of *memorial*, for many a time has a great stone been rolled as a memorial unto God; and we can tell of Ebenezers, stones of help, stones of remembrance. The broken stones of the Law cry out against us, but Christ Himself, who has rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulcher, speaks for us.

Stones might well cry out, but we will not let them—we will hush their noise with ours! We will break forth into sacred song, and bless the majesty of the Most High all our days! Let this day and tomorrow be especially consecrated to holy joys, and may the Lord, in Infinite Mercy, fill your souls right full of it, both in practical deeds of kindness and benevolence and works of praise! Blessed be His name who lives forever and ever!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 19.

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THE AMEN
NO. 679

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 4, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The Amen."
Revelation 3:14.

THE word, "Amen," is much more full of meaning than may be supposed, and as a title of our Lord Jesus Christ it is eminently suggestive. As you know the word is a Hebrew one which has been very properly conveyed not only into our language, but into most, if not all the languages of Christendom. It is a happy circumstance that some of these words should have had vitality enough in them to be transplanted into other tongues and still flourish. It gives some faint foreshadowing of the united worship of celestial spirits, and it indicates the Lord's will that the Hebrew race shall not be forgotten by His Church—and that the language of His well-beloved Israel stills sounds sweetly in His ear.

AMEN signifies, true, faithful, certain—but its sense will be better seen by carefully noting its *uses*. It had at least three forms of practical meaning. First, it was used in the sense of *asserting*—when a person would give peculiar authority to his words he either commenced or concluded with the word, "Amen." And thus he declared as with the solemn "yes, yes," of an honest, truth-loving man—certainly, assuredly, so it is. Our Savior uses the term frequently. The word which we translate, "Verily, verily," is this word "Amen."

You must have observed that John, who has a quick eye for the Divine moods of the Lord Jesus, notes with unerring fidelity the repetition of the asserting word. Whenever our blessed Lord was about to say something peculiarly solemn into which He would throw the full weight of His authority, He asserted it by the doubling of the word "Amen, amen," or "Verily, verily," at the commencement of it.

The second sense of the word, Amen, slightly varies from asserting, and may be more properly described as *consenting*. There is a memorable instance of this in the case of the woman who drank the water of jealousy (Num. 5:22). When she drank the water of jealousy it was enacted that if she had been guilty of the crime laid to her door, certain terrible results should follow as the effect of this water. She, at the time she drank it, said, "Amen, amen," that is, she gave her consent that such-and-such pangs should fall upon her if she had been really guilty of adultery.

A more memorable instance, still, is that of the people assembled upon Mount Ebal and Gerizim. When the threats and the blessings were both read in their hearing, the people said "Amen, amen." So let it be. Of the

like character is the case in the book of Nehemiah. When Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God, all the people answered, Amen, with lifting up of their hands. A third meaning of the word Amen is what we may call *petitionary*. In this sense we use it at the close of our prayers. "Our Father who are in Heaven" is not a complete model of public prayer till it concludes with, "Amen."

In the ancient Church it was customary for the entire congregation to say Amen. Paul alludes to this custom in that expression in the Corinthians where he speaks of persons praying in an unknown tongue—he says, "How should he that occupies the room of the unlearned say Amen at your giving of thanks, seeing he understands not what you say?" We have it put on record by Jerome that at Rome the people were accustomed to say Amen in the gatherings of the early Christians so heartily—I might add, so lustily—that it was like the dash of a cataract, or a clap of thunder!

I could wish that we more uniformly and universally said Amen at the close of public prayer. I am sure it would be Scriptural and Apostolic, and I believe it would be useful to you all. Perhaps the custom was dropped on account of the irregular way in which the brethren said Amen. I have heard the same regularity in certain rustic Methodist congregations when I have thought that the Amen was put in the wrong place, and could have wished the custom to be discontinued altogether, because certain illiterate, rash, but zealous Brethren said Amen when there was nothing to say Amen to! They rather created ridicule than reverence, and showed as much folly as fervor. However, a judicious revival of the custom would, I doubt not, be useful in the Church of God.

It also signifies, "So be it, so let it be," and is virtually the consent of the entire congregation to the prayer which has been put up. Observe the devout Amen of Benaiah, at the close of David's dying prayer, with the remarkable addition, "The Lord God of my lord the king say so too" (1 Kings 1:36). Notice also how the Psalmist closes several of the Psalms, such as the forty-first and the seventy-second with the emphatic conclusion, "Amen and Amen."—

"Let every creature rise and bring
Peculiar honors to our King;
Angels, descend with songs again,
And earth, repeat the long AMEN."

Should you desire still further to enquire into the use and meaning of this remarkable word, there is a valuable sermon upon it in the works of Abraham Booth which you may read, as I have done, to great advantage. If anything should lead to the revival of its use more generally in public worship it will be a matter of great congratulation.

It strikes me that I might have divided my discourse this morning very fairly under these three heads—asserting, consenting, petitioning—for in each of these our adorable Lord Jesus Christ is certainly "the Amen." He

asserts the will of God—He asserts God Himself. God the Son is constantly called the Logos, the Word—He who asserts, declares and testifies God.

In the second place, we know that Jesus Christ consents to the will, design, and purpose of Jehovah. He gives an Amen to the will of God—is, in fact, the echo—in His life and in His death, of the eternal purposes of the Most High. And, thirdly, he is "the Amen" in the petitionary sense, for to all our prayers He gives whatever force and power they have. It is His Amen to our supplication which makes it prevalent at the Throne of the Most High. In these three senses Christ may well be called "THE AMEN."

But we have preferred to divide the discourse another way. Our blessed and ever-to-be-adored Lord Jesus is, first, "the Amen" in reference to God. Secondly, "the Amen" as viewed in Himself. And, thirdly, I trust some of us have distinctly trusted Him to be "The Amen" in regard to ourselves.

I. Refresh your memories upon the great Truth of God, our LORD IS SUPERLATIVELY GOD'S AMEN. Let us review the various points in which He is "the Amen" of God. We must speak, of course, of God after the manner of men. Let that grain of salt be understood to savor all that we say. Jesus is "the Amen" of the Divine purposes. There was a day before all days when there was no day but the Ancient of Days—a time before all times when He who made all time dwelt alone.

Then in His august mind He conceived the plan of redemption. He foresaw the world ruined by sin. He determined that a number whom no man could number should be redeemed unto Himself to be forever His children, the beloved of His soul. These purposes He made, and fixed them fast—there should be a people who should show forth His praise forever and ever. These purposes were but *purposes* until God said Amen to them, and made them valid and sure decrees by determining to give His own dear Son. If God had not resolved to give the Lord Jesus Christ to be a redeemer, the purpose of redemption would have had no Amen. If He had not appointed Christ to be the Head of the body, His purpose concerning the body would have lacked the Amen.

The giving of our souls to Christ according to the Scriptures was a most ancient covenant transaction—and the gift of the Son to us was of equally ancient date—for He is regarded by God as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. That gift of Christ to us in the Everlasting Covenant was the mighty Father's virtually stamping His decree and making it valid and good. Long before you and I had a being—before this great world was made by God out of nothingness—God had made every purpose of His eternal counsel to stand fast and firm by the gift of His dear Son to us. He was then God's Amen to His eternal purpose.

When our Lord actually came upon the earth He was then God's Amen to the long line of prophecies. One by one the servants of God had testified concerning the coming Messiah. Some had spoken evangelically as Isaiah—others with a more legal savor as Moses. But their testimony was to the same effect, that in due time a Prophet should be raised up, and that

there should be born of a virgin a Man who should at the same time be "the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father."

These promises followed thick and fast, all of them cohering, each one manifesting the self-same coming One. But there was no Amen to them—they were things hoped for, but not the *substance*—till at last, in the silence of midnight, angels sweetly sang His advent, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men! For unto you is born this day in Bethlehem a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." That Babe among the horned oxen. That carpenter's son, was God's declaration that prophecy was the voice of Heaven! Now, you Prophets, sleeping in your tombs, it is witnessed that you lied not! Now has God Himself come forth and set to His seal that you are true! In the blessed form of Mary's Child, God's Amen appears both to shepherds and to wise men.

In the same sense, also, Christ was God's Amen to all the Levitical types. The morning and the evening lamb, the red heifer, the turtle doves, and the two young pigeons whose blood stained the altar, the sacrificial bullock, the scapegoat, the plentiful sprinklings of blood—all these were man's avowal that he believed in God—and at the same time God declaring to man that He had provided a Sacrifice. Yonder smoking bullock offered by Aaron and his sons is nothing yet, it is but a figure, it lacks the Amen to give it body, force, substance. That uplifted knife, that priest clad in fair white linen, that blood spilt upon the altar—all these are nothing—they need a soul put into them!

When Jesus Christ came, and especially when up to the Cross as to the altar He went as a victim and was laid on it, then it was that God solemnly put an Amen into what otherwise was but typical and shadowy. "It is finished," said the Savior, and then was, as our poet puts it—

"Finished all the types and shadows
Of the ceremonial law!
Finished all that God had promised;
Death and Hell no more shall awe:
It is finished! Saints, from here your comfort draw."

"The Amen" is set to the purposes, to the prophecies, and to the types. It is exceedingly worthy of your regard that Christ is God's Amen to the Majesty of His Law.

That was a very solemn Amen which God gave on the top of Sinai when He came with ten thousand of His holy ones, and the mountain smoked beneath His feet. As I hear those words, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength," that blast of the trumpet waxing exceedingly loud and long, that crack of thunder, and yon mighty flashes of great lighting were God's Amen! AMEN rolled in peals along the wilderness of Kadesh, made the tents of Kedar tremble, and made the hinds to calve, and broke even the lofty cedars of Lebanon! It was such a terrible Amen that the people begged that they might hear it no more—their hearts were subdued with the terror of the

dread appearances of God's Law though He revealed it in the hands of a mediator by angels.

But, dear Friends, I can point you to a more solemn Amen than that! More terrible than Sinai although you can better bear the sight. God has said, "The soul that sins it shall die." "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them." There stands the Son of God. He has not sinned Himself, but He has the sins of all His people imputed to Him. He has never broken the Law, but all our breaches were laid on Him. Now what will God say to Him? God meets Him as He once met Adam in the garden, but Jesus did not hide Himself as Adam did, He met stern Justice face to face.

There He is, the sinner's Substitute—what will the infinitely just Jehovah say now? The Law says He is accursed, for He has sin upon Him. Will the Father consent that His own Beloved shall be made a curse for us? Hearken and hear the Lord's Amen. "Awake, O sword, against the Man that is My Fellow, said the Lord." What? Does God the Father say Amen? Can it be? It is even so! He says Amen. And what an awful Amen, too, when the streaming sweat of blood leapt from every pore of His most blessed and immaculate body and fell in terrible clots upon the frosty ground! O God, You did say Amen, indeed, to all the terror of Your Law when Christ had to cry, "I am exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

Yet louder still is that Amen at Golgotha where stands the Savior, mocked, despised, rejected. He is at the Roman column, torn with scourges and in the seat of mockery crowned with thorns. There the Law seemed to say, "The sinner is to be despised and rejected, the sinner is a shameful thing, worthy to be spit upon, the sinner deserves to be crowned with thorns." And God says, Amen, and His own dear Son, who stood in the sinner's place, was made to set forth God's awful assent to the demands of Justice. Yonder along the streets of Jerusalem, over stones as hard as the hearts of Jerusalem's sons and daughters—harder they could not be—He leaves a trail of blood up to Calvary's mound!

And then His hands and feet are pierced and His soul pierced with something worse than nails. And then His heart is made to drink of draughts more bitter than wormwood mixed with gall, and His soul the subject of worse temptations than the mere thrusting out of the tongue or the jeer and the jibe of the multitude! There where His soul died within Him because God forsook Him, He shrieked "Eloi! Eloi! Lama Sabachthani?" There it was that God said sternly and dreadfully, "Amen," to that sentence, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree."

Beloved, if you want to see to the fullest degree how God hates sin, and with what vengeance He pursues iniquity, you must see Him hunt that sin right into the shelter which it sought to find in His own dear Son! Though it never was His sin, but *our* sin laid upon Him, yet God spared not His own Son. You have only to see how He was smitten of God and afflicted—because the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with

His stripes we are healed—and you will see at once that Jehovah does not reckon sin to be a trifle.

It must have been a very grand sight to stand in the valley between Ebal and Gerizim to hear the Law read, and then to have heard the six tribes upon Gerizim all say to the blessings solemnly, Amen—like a peal of thunder it must have started from the ten thousand lips of the children of Israel! And then how dreadful, in what subdued awe-stricken tones, like the low murmur of a threatening tempest, must have sounded the dreadful Amen from Ebal, when all the threats were read. "Cursed is he that confirms not all the words of this Law to do them. And all the people shall say Amen."

But mark this word, it was a far more solemn thing when God spoke than when the tribes spoke, and He did speak upon Calvary in tones, the thunder of which reverberate throughout all ages, and are heard in dreadful mutterings in the abyss of Hell! Jehovah, whom cherubs sing as, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts," then said, "Amen, so let it be! Vengeance, take your fill! Justice, slay the Victim! Let the innocent Substitute bleed for men." Our Lord Jesus, so far from destroying the Law, came to be God's Amen to its penalty and to sanction and to establish it as the Law of God forever!

We have not, however, exhausted this topic. Jesus Christ is, as you know, very blessedly God's Amen to all His Covenant promises, for is it not written that "all the promises of God in Him are yes and in Him Amen"? The Apostle Paul seems to have hit upon the very spirit of Christ's name, Amen, when he says, "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?" When God gave His Son He did virtually give all Covenant blessings to His people. The gift of Jesus Christ was God's making every promise which had ever gone before the coming of Christ sure and certain. Christ was the wax melted in the fire upon which God set the stamp of His own honor that He would be true to the Covenant engagements which He had made.

Brothers and Sisters, if the saying of Amen upon Mount Gerizim to the blessing of the Law had something delightfully cheering and comfortable about it, how much more divinely sweet was Jehovah's Amen when Jesus Christ rose from the dead triumphant?! How much more when up the everlasting hills He rode in glorious triumph, leading captivity captive?! Devout Spirits, come here and mark God's Amen to the blessings of the Covenant! See yonder the mighty throng of angels and hear their song as they sing, "Lift up your heads, O you gates. And be you lift up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in."

Do you desire to hear God's Amen? Hear it as He bids His Son, amidst universal acclamations, sit upon His Throne and reign with Him, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool! Oh, greatly blessed are you, you Saints who are one with Jesus, for God has blessed Him and there-

fore you! On high enthroned are you, O Saints, for Christ enthroned stands! Him has God exalted, and He has exalted all His saints in Him! He joys not for Himself alone—the meanest Christian has a part in all the glories of the Savior! The enthronization of Christ is God's solemn declaration and Amen that He will bless all His people and make them kings and priests to reign forever and ever.

Once more, Jesus Christ will be God's Amen at the conclusion of this dispensation in the fullness of time. I am not going into curious questions about how this dispensation will end. I have my own notions about it—other people have theirs. I believe if some people were as private about theirs as I am about mine, they would not sell so many two penny books, nor make so many foolish guesses at the future! I know just this about that, that Jesus Christ will come in due time, and that when He comes, whether immediately, or after a millennial reign, two things will surely happen—the righteous will be rewarded, and the wicked will be condemned. These two things we can be quite sure of.

Now, when God shall put into His dear Son's mouth those words, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world," that will be a most solemn Amen to God's purpose made concerning those saints! Indeed, it will be the Amen to the Covenant in the whole of its range, and to the entire work of Divine Grace from the first to the last! Then, as they come streaming up the sky in glorious pomp, to reign with Jesus Christ forever, Death and Hell, and the assembled world shall mark with shame and dismay God's Amen to His own eternal purposes, and to the work of His glorified Son.

When, turning to the left, the Judge shall say, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell"—before the word is spoken the ungodly will recognize Christ as being "the Amen" to all that God had threatened! In their cries to the rocks to hide them, in their shrieks to the mountains to fall upon them they will at once make clear to assembled multitudes that they perceive Jesus to be "the Amen," making God's threats true! And when His voice shall have cursed them forever, it will be the weighty Amen throughout eternity! It will be the emphatic reasserting at once of their guilt and of their punishment—that their sentence came from Jesus—that same Jesus who died for sinners and whom sinners crucified and rejected.

Had it come from any other lips the sentence had not been so dreadful. But coming from the Man, as well as from the God, it shall be humanity assenting to God's verdict as well as God declaring and enforcing the sanctions of His Law. Oh Sinner, may Christ never be God's Amen to you in that sense! But, on the contrary, may you hide in the wounds of Jesus, and find all the blessings in Him, yes, and in Him, Amen, to you! I have thus spoken sufficiently upon this point if God blesses it to you—and so let us turn to our second head.

II. Our Redeemer took this as a personal title to Himself. He called Himself "the Amen," and so He is. Our second point, then, is THAT HE IS OUR AMEN IN HIMSELF. He proved Himself to be Amen—the God of truth, sincerity, and faithfulness in His fulfillment of Covenant engagements. The Lord Jesus Christ undertook to bring many saints to Glory. His Father gave Him a people to be His forever and He undertook, in suretyship engagements, that every one of these should be delivered perfect and complete when they should be required at His hands.

He undertook, in order to this, that He would suffer, bleed, and die for His Church—that all her debts should be discharged from His own veins—that a perfect righteousness should be worked out for her in which she should stand all beauteous in the sight of God. Brethren, I leave it to your own judgment, you who know the Lord Jesus, whether He has not faithfully kept His engagements. He has been "the Amen" to the full, in this respect. "Lo, I come! In the volume of the Book it is written of Me: I delight to do Your will, O God."

From old eternity He declared Himself to be ready to go through the work, and when the time came He was straitened till the work was done. When He was a servant in the house of His Father, He might have gone out free if He had pleased. He might have left the service had He willed, but He said, "I love My Master, and I love My Master's children." And so, like a man who would not accept freedom under the old Jewish Law, His ear was fastened to the doorpost of God's house and He became the servant of His people forever. "My ear have You opened."

Beloved, He has fulfilled His service! Seven years of toil for Rachel were achieved by Jacob, and seven years afterwards—and our Master has achieved the same. He has paid the price of His Beloved to the uttermost farthing, and up till now it can be said of Him, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." "Of all whom you have given Me I have lost none." Let us praise and bless His name as we see Him in Covenant engagements faithful and true, "the Amen."

He was also "the Amen" in all His teachings. We have already remarked that He constantly commenced with, "Verily, verily." The Pharisees in their teachings began with insinuating doubts, beclouding the mind with mystifications, and raising needless difficulties. It was considered to be the right thing for a philosopher never to teach dogmatically—but Christ never spoke in any other way. You find Him beginning, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Christ, as Teacher, does not appeal to tradition, or even to reasoning, but gives *Himself* as His authority. He quotes, indeed, the authority of, "It is written," and speaks of the things which He had seen and heard of His Father. But this He states upon the authority of His own oneness with the Father.

He comes clad with Divine authority and He does not deign to dispute or to argue, but He claims for His words that they are Amen. We have accepted His teachings, I hope, in that same spirit. I do not open the evange-

lists to find Christ's words to cavil over them. I do not turn to the Epistles to criticize the teachings of my Lord, nor to raise difficult questions with which to wrangle with the great Teacher. The position of a Christian is at his Master's feet, not disputing but receiving—not questioning, but believing. And in this sense Christ claims, as a Prophet and Teacher, to be "the Amen."

He is also "the Amen" in all His promises. Sinner, I would comfort you with this reflection. Jesus Christ said, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you come to Him, you will not find that He has revoked that promise, but He will say, "Amen," in your soul. That promise shall be true to you. He said in the days of His flesh, "The bruised reed I will not break, and the smoking flax I will not quench." Oh you poor, broken, bruised Heart, if you come to Him He will say Amen to you, and that shall be true in your soul as in hundreds of cases in bygone years.

These are His own words, which He spoke to His servant John: "The Spirit and the Bride say come; and let him that hears say come; and whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." He says Amen to all those "comes," and when you come and are anxious to drink, He will say Amen to your coming and to your drinking, for He declares to you, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." From the Throne of God where He is highly exalted, He utters the very same sentence now, and says Amen to that which He declared before!

Christian, is not this very comforting to you, also, that there is not a word which has gone out of the Savior's lips which He has ever retracted? "I have not spoken in secret, in the dark places of the earth: I said not to the seed of Jacob, Seek you My face in vain." No stopping of Christ's bills—they shall be duly honored when the time comes. If you get a hold of but half a promise, you shall find it true! Beware of him who is called "Clip-promise," who will run away with much of the comfort of God's Word! But if you should even get a clipped promise, God will honor it—He will still keep His Word. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." You have to deal with Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, today, and forever." Therefore be not afraid—

"***His very word of Grace is strong***
As that which built the skies
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises."

I must not, however, tarry here. Jesus Christ is yes and Amen in all His offices. He was a Priest to pardon and cleanse once. He is Amen as Priest, still. He was a King to rule and reign for His people, and to defend them with His mighty arm. He is an Amen King, still the same. He was a Prophet of old to foretell good things to come. His lips are most sweet, and still drop with honey—He is an Amen Prophet. He is Amen as to the merit of His blood—

"Dear dying Lamb,

Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power."

He is Amen as to His righteousness. That sacred robe shall remain most fair and glorious when nature shall decay. He is Amen in every single title which He bears—your Husband, never seeking a divorce—your Head, the neck never being dislocated. He is your Friend, sticking closer than a brother—your Shepherd, with you in death's dark valley—your Help and your Deliverer! He is your Castle and your High Tower—the Horn of your strength, your Confidence, your Joy, your All in All, and Amen in all.

I must close all this by reminding you that He is Amen with regard to His Person. He is still faithful and true, immutably the same. Not less than God! No furrows on that eternal brow—no palsy in that mighty arm—no faintness in that Almighty heart! There is no lack of fullness in His all-sufficiency—no diminution in the keenness of His eyes—no defalcation in the purpose of His heart. Omnipotent, Immutable, Eternal, Omnipresent still! God over all, blessed forever! O Jesus, we adore You, You great Amen!

He is the same, too, as to His manhood. Bone of our bone still. In all our afflictions still afflicted. Our Brother in ties of blood as much today as when He wore a peasant's garb, and said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests. But the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." He has the same heart of sympathy, the same heart of compassion—remembering us and bidding us remember Him. Not for a moment changed because of the change of His condition. Not for an instant unmindful of us because of the harps of angels and the songs of the redeemed. As quick to hear a sigh or catch a tear today as when in the days of His flesh He comforted His people and carried the lambs in His bosom!

The Amen Savior! Oh, blessed is His name! Let us worship Him as the great Mediator between God and our souls, feeling joy to think that in all this He suffers no shadow of a change—

"Blessings forever on the Lamb
Who bore the curse for wretched men.
Let angels sound His sacred name,
And every creature say, AMEN."

III. But I must roll all this up and leave you to digest and to enjoy the sweetness of the Truths of God which are contained in that short title, "the Amen." I have to close now by saying that THE LORD JESUS IS EXPERIMENTALLY GOD'S AMEN TO EVERY BELIEVING SOUL. We may say in the first place that He is God's Amen in us. Beloved, it is not impossible to prove the existence of God by argument. It is not altogether difficult to demonstrate the reasonableness of the Gospel by syllogism and by logic. None but the man who is deficient of brains, I think, need be long without being assured of the authenticity of Scripture.

But let me say to you that all that argument, reasoning and logic can do for you is less than nothing and vanity. You will doubt in the teeth of

argument, and be skeptical in the face of demonstration as long as your heart does not love the Truth of God. Your head may be convinced, but your heart will always supply enough atheism to keep your head at work. And your head will always be willing to receive an abundant supply from that nethermost cavern of your depravity.

But let me say to you if you want to know God you must know Christ. If you want to be sure of the truth of the Bible you must believe Jesus. And I warrant you that when you have once looked up and seen Incarnate God bearing your sins. When you have thrown yourself flat upon the Rock of Ages and have felt the inward joy and peace which flow from believing in God, you will have heard an Amen to that old Book, and an Amen to the existence of God, and an Amen to the Gospel which Satan himself can never remove from your remembrance! You will be confident where once you were diffident! You will believe with a Lutheran vigor when once you have laid hold of Jesus Christ. I believe that this is the keynote of all true believing—to lay hold on Jesus Christ—

"Till God in human flesh I see
My thoughts no comfort find."

And when I get Christ, my thoughts not only have comfort but they get a solid conviction that the things must be true. Perhaps there are few among you here that are troubled with skeptical doubts. They will afflict some of us, and I can say with regard to them whenever they come across my soul in any shape or form, I find the short and quick answer is this—I know one thing—namely, that I am not what I used to be. I know that I have entered into a new world. I feel spiritual heaving in my soul, spiritual longing, emotions, desires to which I was once an utter stranger!

I know there has been as great a metamorphosis passed upon me as though a swine should suddenly become a seraph. I know that the very thought of Jesus keeps me back from sin and impels me in the path of duty. I know that His name exercises such a charm over me that no magician's wand ever worked such wonders. My rocky heart melts, my frozen soul dissolves at the touch of His love! And I, a clod of dead earth, suddenly get wings and fly and commune with the eternal God! Why, that *must* be true which has done all this for me! It cannot be a lie, it must be true!

I feel within myself that my own consciousness must be true, and the Lord Jesus has so interwoven and intertwisted Himself with my being—no, overlaid and covered my being—that though I should doubt all beside, I could not doubt the existence and Divine power of my Lord Jesus Christ! Depend on it, dear Friend, if you want to know the Gospel, you must receive Jesus Christ, and when you know Him you know the Gospel. Mahomet, you know, is not Mohammedanism, but Jesus is Christianity. Jesus Himself is the Bible! Jesus is God's Word. Trust Him and you shall doubt no more.

Next, Jesus Christ is "the Amen," not only in us, but "the Amen" *for* us. When you pray, dear Friend, you say Amen. Did you think of Christ? Did

you look to His wounds? Did you offer your prayer through Him? Did you ask Him to present it before God? Did you expect to be heard by virtue of His intercession? If not, there is no Amen to your prayer. But if you have prayed, though it were but a sigh or a tear—if you were looking to the Cross—Jesus Christ's blood said Amen, and your prayer is as certain to be heard in Heaven as it was heard on earth! As sure as it came from your inmost soul and Christ was pleaded in it, the answer must certainly come!

And now I pray, dear Friends, that Jesus Christ should be God's Amen in all our hearts as to all the good things of the Covenant of Grace this morning. I am sure He will be if you receive Him. We who have believed have entered into rest. If you have Christ you have entered into rest. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." You that have Christ have peace with God this morning. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

If you have Christ, you are saved. Christ is God's Amen. Get Christ and you have the promises. Get Jesus, and you are like the man who has an estate and is secure of his property because he holds the title deeds. He says, "I have got the estate." "Where is it?"—he shows you the title deeds. "Oh," says another man, "that is not the estate! That is far away in the north of England." "I have it however," says the owner, and he folds up his deeds, ties them round, and puts them away in his chest. "I have possession of the estate."

Well, dear Friends, we have Heaven! We have God Himself because we have Christ—and Christ is the title deeds of all things. May you—

"Read your title clear,
To mansions in the skies,"

and the Lord make Jesus to be to your hearts, today, joyfully and blessedly His own Amen.

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HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN HIM?
NO. 680

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 11, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I do remember my faults this day."
Genesis 41:9.

No single power or faculty of man escaped damage at the Fall—while the affections were polluted, the will was made perverse, the judgment was shifted from its proper balance, and the memory lost much of its power and more of its integrity. Every observing mind will have noticed that naturally we have a greater power for remembering evil than good. Very plain is this in your children. If you mention anything good in their hearing you had need to say it many times, and very plainly before they are likely to remember it; but if one ill word shall casually meet their ear in the street, it will not be long before you have the pain of hearing them repeat it. Our memory is like theirs, only in proportion as it is developed this peculiarity is more manifest. We have a most convenient warehouse for storing the merchandise of evil, but the priceless jewels of goodness are readily stolen from their case. We have a fireproof safe for worthless matters, and enclose the rarest gems in mere pasteboard cases. Our memory, like a strainer, often allows the good wine to pass through, but retains all the dregs. It holds the bad in an iron grasp, and plays with good till it slips through the fingers. Our memories, like ourselves, have done the things which they ought not to have done, and have left undone the things which they ought to have done, and there is no health in them.

Among other things, it is not always easy to remember our faults. We have special and particular reasons for not wishing to be too often reminded of them. Few men care to keep their faults in the front room of the house. Underground, in the darkest cellar, and, if possible, with the door locked and the key lost; it is there we would like to conceal our faults from ourselves. If, however, the Grace of God has entered into a man he will pray that he may remember his faults, and he will ask Divine Grace that if he should forget any excellences which he once supposed he had, he may not forget his defects, his sins, his infirmities, and his transgressions, but may have them constantly before him, that he may be humbled by them and led to seek pardon for them and help to overcome them.

I do not say that the butler in this case had any work of Divine Grace in his heart, but I shall use him as an illustration, and hope by using my watchman's rattle to wake up some of your sleepy memories, for there are thieves about, and you are being robbed without knowing it. It will be

a healthy result to us all if we shall be compelled to say at the end of this sermon, *"I do remember my faults this day."*

In the first place this morning, using the butler as our illustration, *we shall state his faults;* secondly, *we shall consider the circumstances which refreshed his memory;* and, thirdly, *we shall show the good points in his remembrance.*

I. We shall first call your attention to the BUTLER'S FAULTS, for his faults are ours, only ours are on a larger scale: *"I do remember my faults this day."*

His particular fault was that he had forgotten Joseph; that, having promised to remember him when it should be well with him, he had altogether overlooked the circumstances which occurred in the prison, and had been enjoying himself, and leaving his friend to pine in obscurity.

Here, then, is the first fault—*the butler had forgotten a friend.* That is never a thing to be said to a man's praise. We ought to write the deeds of friendship as much as possible in marble; and that man is unworthy of esteem who can readily forget favors received. Joseph had done all that he could to make the butler's sojourn in prison comfortable. It was hard, that as soon as the butler had escaped from prison, his friend Joseph had escaped his memory. Save us from men who can so easily forget. But you and I have a Friend—we call Him very dear; we are accustomed to speak of Him in very rapturous terms. We declare that no others have such a Friend as we have—we have made our boast that there is none other who deserves the name in comparison with Him whom we call our best Beloved; and yet how many of us have forgotten Him? His name we know, His nature we understand, His blessings we sometimes rejoice in—but frequently His Divine Person, His blessed Self, alas, how cold our love to Him! This fault will not strike the carnal mind as being a great one, but in proportion as our hearts are spiritual and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we shall feel it a great and grievous sin to have in any measure forgotten our best Friend.

The circumstances were these—the butler was in prison, and then this friend came to him and spoke comfortably to him. Do you remember when *you were in prison?* I never can forget when I was bound in fetters far harder, heavier, and more painful to wear than fetters of iron. It was a dark dungeon, without a ray of light; there was no rest in it neither night nor day. A certain fearful looking for judgment and of fiery indignation haunted that gloomy cell. I struggled to be free, but the more I struggled, the more difficult did my bondage become. I was as one in the deep mire, who, by every struggle only sinks himself the more hopelessly in it.

Do you not remember? Oh, Believers, you have passed through the same experience! Your feet were in the stocks, you laid in the innermost prison while the whip of the Law frequently fell upon your backs. The sentence of execution thundered in your ears and you trembled lest you should be dragged forth to your doom! Do you not remember it, the wormwood and the gall? Joseph came to the butler and said, "Why do you look so sad today?" In our case we have not forgotten how Jesus

came to us and inquired into our state. With what tender accents of sympathy did He address our hearts! He told us—and we could readily believe it—that He would not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed. We had not been accustomed to be addressed in this fashion, for the voice of Moses is far from musical, and his tones are very grating to the ears; but when Jesus spoke it was all soft and sweet. "Poor Sinner!" He said, as though He pitied rather than blamed. He looked upon us not with an eye searching for iniquity, but with a heart which saw our calamity and which looked for the means to deliver us. Have you forgotten those times of brokenness of spirit when the only comfort which you knew was the name of Jesus? When the only stay for the hunger and thirst which were in your spirits was a morsel or two of His sweet Love which He graciously cast to you to keep you by the way?

Do you remember your dream? The butler had a dream; do you remember yours? It was more than a night dream; it was a day dream with a terrible interpretation appended to it in your mind. You dreamed of a vine, too, and you were the cluster, and you dreamed of the time when you should be cast into the winepress, and trod beneath the feet of Almighty Wrath until your blood should fill the cup of Divine Vengeance even to the brim. Do you remember that dream? How it haunted you, and seemed like some huge bird of prey with black wings and horrid cries, fluttering over you as though about to tear you in pieces? I remember when day was night to me, and night was worse than night. "Then You scared me with dreams, and terrified me through visions," was the cry of Job, and such has been the lament of many and many a heart under the weight of sin. Oh, how guilt can thunder in our ears; how the Word of God can grow terrible and stern! "God is angry with you! God is angry with the wicked every day! It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment." In our terror we could see the rider on the pale horse, and feel ourselves overtaken by him, and struck down by the horses' hoofs! We saw ourselves cast into the pit of Hell, and seemed to be falling, falling, falling, ever sinking from the angry glance of God, and still as dreadfully near to it as before! That was our dream, and the interpretation, the only interpretation which seemed to fit it was this, "You will be banished from His Presence into eternal misery."

Beloved, do you remember when *Jesus came with the interpretation of a very different kind,* just as Joseph did to the butler? He interpreted to the butler that Pharaoh would lift him up and put him in his place again; and so Jesus came to us, and told us that we were condemned in ourselves that we might not be condemned at the last; that we had a sentence of death in ourselves because God intended never to pass that sentence in the Court of Heaven, and had instead passed it in the Court of our conscience. He told us that God never kills with His Law in the heart without intending to make alive, that when He wounds He heals, that when He strips He means to clothe. We did not understand this. We thought that all this terrible dealing within our heart was the prelude of everlasting judgment, but He showed us that as many as God loves He rebukes and chastens, that it is the way with Him to break up the clods

with the plow before He casts in the golden seed; and to dig out deep foundations before He piles polished stones one upon another to make a Temple to His praise. Ah, I never shall forget when, at the foot of the Cross, I saw the interpretation of all my inward griefs when I looked up and saw the flowing of my Savior's precious blood, and had the great riddle all solved. My Brothers and Sisters, what a discovery was that when we learned the secret that we were to be saved not by what we were or were to be, but saved by what Christ had done for us! The simplicity of the Cross is the grandest of all revelations. "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." Why it is as simple as the interpretation which Joseph gave to the dream; but in its simplicity lies a great part of its sweetness. How was it that I was such a fool as not to understand it before, that for every sinner who was truly a sinner, and had no righteousness of his own, Jesus Christ is made righteousness and salvation? And that every sinner who confesses with a broken heart that he deserves God's Wrath, he may know that Jesus has suffered all God's Wrath for him, and that therefore God is no longer angry with him—for all His anger has been spent upon the Person of Jesus Christ.

How sweet it is to understand that all our soul's terrors and alarms are only meant to bring us to the Cross; that they are not intended to make us look at ourselves, to search for comfort there, nor intended to set us upon paving a way to Heaven by our own exertions, but to lead us to Jesus. Happy day! We see Jesus as the cluster crushed until the heart's blood flows, and can by faith go in unto the King, with Jesus Christ's own precious blood and offer that, just as the butler stood before Pharaoh with the wine cup in his hand. I bear a cup filled not with my blood but His blood; not the blood from *me* as a cluster of the vine of earth, but the blood of *Jesus* as a cluster of Heaven's own vintage, pouring out its precious floods to make glad the heart of God and man.

Here lies our fault—*that we have forgotten all this*—not forgotten the fact, but forgotten to love Him who gave us that soul-comforting, heart-cheering interpretation. Beloved, when Jesus revealed Himself at first, our hearts were ready to leap out of our bodies for joy. Do you remember the time you thought you could sing always and never stop? Nothing was too hard, no burden was too heavy for you then, for your soul was all on fire with love. But ah, since then, what a sad declension! You forgot your Joseph, you forgot your Friend who gave you this kind interpretation of your dream.

Dear Friends, there was something which ought to have made the butler remember Joseph. When I read the story just now, it came very vividly to my own mind. It was this—that there was another in prison at the same time with him, and what had become of him? *The baker had been hanged!* And if the butler had chosen to walk out, he might have seen the relics of the body of his poor miserable companion, gibbeted to be fed upon by kites and carrion crows. That poor wretch had dreamed a dream, too, but the interpretation had been very different. When some of us look back to the time when we were in sin with others, and recollect that although we are here, the living, to praise the Redeemer's name,

some of our old companions are—we shudder to think of it, but it is so—at this moment in Hell! How shall we praise the Electing Grace which has made us to differ? It is a solemn thought that such differences should occur—

"Why were we made to hear His voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"

Some of you used to spend hour after hour in the public house, and you could blaspheme God's name; and while those whom you once drank with are now drinking the cup of God's Wrath, you, who were not one whit better than they—in some points even worse, are now saved by Sovereign Grace. Discriminating Grace should always give a high tone to our gratitude. He has not dealt thus with every people. Praise the Lord! If you whom God has chosen, and whom Christ has especially and effectually called by Divine Grace from among others—if you do not remember Him, what shall I say to you? Oh, dear Friends, how it should humble you, and bow you down in the dust, that after such remarkable, peculiar, distinguishing Love as that of which you have been the subjects, you should still forget your dear Friend, and fail in point of duty where you ought to have been faithful to Him.

We have not, however, quite finished with the case of the butler and Joseph. *The request which Joseph made of the butler was a very natural one.* He said, "Think of me when it is well with you." He asked no hard, difficult, exacting favor, but simply, "Think of me, and speak to Pharaoh. You will have his ear in moments when kings are most likely to be in good humor; you will wait upon him at his feasts; then, when it is well with you, and the time is come, put in a word for your poor friend who will be pining away in the damps of the dungeon." It was a very simple thing, and I will be bound to say the butler said to him, "Oh, my dear fellow, I will not only do that, but I do not know what I will *not* do for you; you shall be out of prison within a week, and I will take good care that you have the fat of all the land of Egypt, and I will see that that Potiphar and his wife shall be severely punished for all the wrong they have done you." But he did nothing of the kind. What the Savior asks of us, His servants, is most natural and most simple, and quite as much for our good as it is for His Glory. Among other things, He has said to all of you who love Him, "This do in remembrance of Me." He has asked you to gather around His Table, and break bread with His servants, and feast with Him. Some of you have never obeyed His command yet; you say you love Him, but you forget Him. It was kind of Him to institute that blessed ordinance to help your memory; it is doubly unkind of you that you not only forget Him, but are not willing to use the means to have that frail memory of yours refreshed. Moreover, of you who come to His Table He asks the favor to speak a good word for Him wherever you have an opportunity. During the last week have you spoken for Jesus? He asks you to spread abroad the savor of His name; have you done so during the last month or not? He requests of you that as you are an heir with Him, and a partaker of His Kingdom, you will help Him to spread it, not by

word of mouth only, but by your gifts and by your labors. What have you done?

Suppose that now the Lord Jesus Christ should occupy this pulpit instead of me, and stand here, and spread His hands, and show you His wounds, could you dare to look at Him? Might not some of you have crimsoned cheeks as you would have to confess, "Ah, Master, we have forgotten You. As to much practical service and honor of Your name, we have been quite as negligent as the butler was concerning Joseph." Well, He is here in spirit, and He will soon be here in Person. Servants of the Master, be faithful to your Master; but oh, all you who lean upon His bosom, and have familiar union with Him—I will not merely speak of faithfulness to you, but I charge you by your love, by the lilies, and by the animals of the field—see to it that you not forget your Beloved! Day by day, and hour by hour, feast Him with your wine, with your milk, with the choicest of your gifts, and the richest products of your souls. Labor for Him, live for Him, and be ready to die for Him who has done so much for you!

I have thus stated the butler's case, but I shall want to pause a minute or two over this head just to go into the reason of his fault. *Why was it that he did not remember Joseph?* There is always a reason for everything, if we but try to find it out. He must have been swayed by one of three reasons.

Perhaps the butler was *naturally ungrateful.* We do not know, but that may have been the case. He may have been a person who could receive unbounded favors without a due sense of obligation. I trust that is not our case in the fullest and most unmitigated sense—but I am afraid we must all plead guilty in a measure. Were there ever such ungrateful ones as the saints of God? We treat no other friend as badly as we treat our Lord. We love our parents, we feel gratitude towards friends who have assisted us in times of need, we are bound by very strong ties to certain persons who were very greatly an assistance to us in a pinch, but our dear Savior, better than father and mother, fonder than the fondest friend, closer than the most loving spouse, how ill we use *Him!* I am afraid, Brothers and Sisters, we had better all of us say it is ingratitude here—we are basely ungrateful to Him. But let us not confess it as a matter of course; let us be ashamed to have such a thing to say, let us feel that it lowers us more than anything else could lower us; that it proves how total, how abject, how degrading must have been the Fall of Adam, that even the love of Jesus Christ shed abroad in hearts like ours in such a remarkable and plenteous manner, cannot cure us of the base and detestable vice of ingratitude! Oh You dear One, can I look upon Your face, all covered with Your bloody sweat, can I view You again all covered with the spit from the mouths of Your enemies, can I see You in Your thirst and anguish on the Cross, and know that every pang was for *me*, and every woe for *me,* and not a groan or spasm of pain for Yourself, but all for love of *me* who was Your enemy—and can I, after that, *forget You?* Oh my Soul, loathe yourself that you should be ungrateful to Him!

Perhaps, however, *worldly care* choked the memory. The chief butler had a great deal to do—he had many under-servants, and having to wait in a palace much care was required. He who serves a despot like the king of Egypt must be very particular in his service. It is very possible that the butler was so busy with his work and his gains, and looking after his fellow servants and all that, that he forgot poor Joseph. Is it not very possible that this may be the case with us? We forget the Lord Jesus to whom we are bound by such ties because our business is so large, our family so numerous, our cares so pressing, our bills and bonds so urgent—and even, perhaps, our gains are so large. There is as much power to divide the heart from Christ in gain as there is in loss; in fact, the sharpest edge of the world's sword is *prosperity*. The back cut of adversity very seldom wounds as prosperity does. And yet, dear Friends, what are all these cares that they should make us forget our Lord? I know not to what to compare us. Unto what shall I compare our folly? We are like children in the marketplace who have their little plays and games, their pieces of broken crock and stick and stone, and these take up all their thoughts; and they forget their dear mother who is calling them. She has nourished these children, and day by day her heart cares for them, but they forget her. They cannot live without her—they must go to her for all their necessities; the very clothes on their backs are her workmanship, and the food that keeps life in their bodies she must find; but they are too busy, too busy with these little plays and toys and mere dirt and such things as children in the market will play with, too busy to think of her. Oh, it is base that it should be so, but we are sadly worldly.

I am afraid John Bunyan's picture of the man with the muck-rake is not altogether unlike some of God's own children. Here we are with the rake groping over the dunghill, although above us stands the angel with the golden crown calling to us to look up from the dunghill and remember our lasting and enduring portion; but no, not we, that dunghill takes up so much of our time and thoughts, that the crown is forgotten! Do not misunderstand me, I would not have you be negligent in business—neither reason nor Revelation require that—but oh, if you could remember the Savior in it all, and if you traded for His sake, and worked for Him, and in the ordinary deeds of life did all as unto the Lord ("whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus")—then, truly, everything might remind you of Him and both gain and loss, mercy and misery, might only drive you nearer to His blessed bosom!

I am half ashamed to have to say one thing more. I am afraid that the butler forgot Joseph out of *pride;* because he had grown to be such a great man, and Joseph was in prison. He was butler to the king. Now when he was in prison Joseph was his equal, and in some sense his superior for he waited on him. But now my lord, the butler, has great interest at court, and he wears splendid garments, and he is very great among his fellow servants. Joseph—Joseph smells of the dungeon! He is a jailbird, and quite beneath him. He knows not what Joseph is to become, that all the glories of the land of Egypt are to be at Joseph's

feet—but he is ashamed of Joseph. I do not suppose this operates with many of you, but I have known it with some professed Believers. When they were little in Israel, when they first professed to have found peace, oh, how they acknowledged Jesus! But they got on in the world and prospered, and then they could not worship among those poor people who were good enough for them once—they now drive to a more fashionable place of worship where the Lord Jesus is seldom heard of. They feel themselves bound to get into a higher class of society, as they call it, and the poor despised cause of Jesus is beneath them, forgetting, as they foolishly do, that the day will come when Christ's cause shall be uppermost; when the world shall go down and the faithful followers of the Lord Jesus shall be peers and princes even in this world, and reign with Him; He being King of kings and Lord of lords, and they sitting upon His Throne and sharing in His royal dignity. I hope none of you have forgotten Christ because of that. I do not know, though—I have my fears of some of you. I do know this, that many a working man thinks more of Christ while he is so than he does when he rises above his fellows. We have heard of one who used to give much when he was poor, but when he grew rich he gave less, and he said, "when I had a shilling purse I had a guinea heart, and wished I could do much more for Christ. But now I have a guinea purse, I find I have only a shilling heart, and I am for stinting and doing less." Oh let it not be so! Shall it be that the more He gives the less we give, and the more *He* shows His love, the less we show *our* love? God forbid that we should do this, but by every tie of gratitude let us serve Him more and more each day!

There was very great heinousness in this forgetfulness on the part of the butler, and he ought to have felt it. Perhaps the way for us to see our own fault is this. Suppose the butler had put himself in Joseph's place and said, "Now I wonder what Joseph thinks of my conduct? Suppose I were Joseph in prison, and I had done this favor to someone else? How should I feel with regard to his forgetfulness?" My dear Friends, can you suppose yourselves in Jesus Christ's place? Suppose it possible that you could have died for another, and by your death could have saved him, and made him the partaker of everlasting joys, what would you think of him if he treated you as you treat Jesus Christ? You would say, "I am ashamed of him. I regret that ever I spent so much love on such a thankless person." Judge, then—judge your own case!

Again, he might have judged of the heinousness of his forgetfulness by considering his conduct as he would have considered it at the first. Suppose a prophet had told you, when you were first converted, that you would live as you have done? Could you have believed it? You would have said "Never! If the Lord Jesus Christ does but take my burden off my back and set me free, there is nothing which I will not do for Him. I will be none of your cold, dead professors, not I." But you have been, dear Friends; you have been just as lukewarm as others. Judge of your sin as you would have judged of it at the first.

Again, will you please to judge of it as you judge of other people? What do you think of other cold hearts? What do you think of other chilly

professors, whose lives are lukewarm, and whose love knows no fervency? Judge yourselves by the same judgment. Put your spirit in the same scale, and be humbled; yes, let every one of us lay our face in the dust as we confess this day that we are verily guilty concerning the Lord Jesus. Let us all remember our faults this day.

II. The second point is this—WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES BROUGHT THE FAULT TO THE BUTLER'S MIND? The same circumstances which surround us this morning.

First, *he met with a person in the same condition as that in which he once was.* King Pharaoh had dreamed a dream and wished for an interpretation. Joseph could interpret; and the butler remembered his fault. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, there are those in the world who are in the same state of mind as you were once in. They once loved sin and hated God, and were strangers and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; but in some of them there has been the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit, and they have dreamed a dream. They are awakened, although not yet enlightened. Salvation is a riddle to them at present, and they want the interpretation. Do you not remember how the Gospel was blessed to you? Do you not desire to send it to others? If you cannot preach yourself, will you not help me in my life-work of training others to preach Jesus? If I could bring before you this morning a score or two of anxious persons up from country villages and remote parts of our own land, you would say, "Oh, let me tell them about the Savior, or let me help to send someone to them who will do so." That is just the effect I want to produce without using that means. I want to make you remember your Lord Jesu; practically remember Him—by reminding you that there are persons who are now seeking Him, who are now panting after Him, who have not yet heard the Gospel, and are longing for some herald of peace to come to them and proclaim the good news. By the love of souls, aid me in my great anxiety to supply the needs of the age with a ministry called of God to preach His Truth.

The next thing that recalled the butler's thought was this; he saw that *many means had been used to interpret Pharaoh's dream, but they had all failed.* We read that Pharaoh sent for his wise men, but they could not interpret his dream. You are in a similar case. There are thousands in England who are trying to minister to spiritual necessities; above all we have Popery in its double form—Romish and Anglican—doing its best to interpret the dream of the human heart. You know what a sad mess it makes of it; it gives a stone instead of bread, brings to poor, needy, guilty man, anything but the Savior he needs. Now, as you hear these foolish wise men all blundering over the dream, do you not think of the Joseph who could interpret it? And as you hear these men holding up baptismal regeneration and sacramental salvation, does not your tongue long to say, "O fools! O generation of simpletons! It is Christ Jesus who is the great Interpreter; He alone can supply human necessities." Do you not feel a need, if you cannot go and preach yourselves, to help others to do so? Will you remember Jesus Christ as you remember how many are perverting the Gospel, and preaching anything rather than the merit of

His Cross? Remember your Lord today, and your faults concerning Him, but let your remembrance lead to future diligence in His cause.

Then, again, if the butler could have known it, he had other motives for remembering Joseph. *It was through Joseph that the whole land of Egypt was blessed.* Joseph comes out of prison, interprets the dream which God had given to the head of the State, and that interpretation preserved all Egypt, yes, and all other nations during seven years of drought. Only Joseph could do it. Oh Brothers and Sisters, you know that it is only Jesus who is the balm of Gilead for the wounds of this poor dying world! You know that there is nothing which can bless our land, and all other lands, like the Cross of Jesus Christ! Have you forgotten your Savior? Have you allowed His Gospel to lie by without preaching it yourselves or helping others to preach it? Have you allowed the precious Truth of God to be like Joseph, hidden in prison, when you might have helped to bring it out into open court that others might hear and know the sound which has made glad your own heart? Then, as you remember England, the country of your love, as you remember other lands, which in proportion are dear to you, will you not think of Jesus today, and do something for the promotion of His cause?

Once more, surely the butler would have remembered Joseph had he known to what an exaltation Joseph would be brought. Under God it was all through the butler saying, "I remember Joseph," that Joseph came out of prison, that he stood before Pharaoh, that he rode in the second chariot, that the heralds cried before him, "Bow the knee!" and that Joseph, the poor prisoner, became Governor over the land of Egypt. Christian, would you like to lift up the name of Jesus from obscurity into the throne of the human heart? At this present moment throughout this world Jesus Christ is still the despised and rejected of men. He is still a root out of a dry ground to the mass of mankind, and the only way in which He can be exalted is by loving hearts telling of Him and helping others to tell of Him. Think of the splendor which yet will surround our Lord Jesus! He shall come, Beloved, He shall come in the chariots of salvation! The day draws near when all things shall be put under Him. Kings shall yield their crowns to His superior sway, and whole sheaves of scepters, plucked from tyrants' hands, shall be gathered beneath His arms—

"Look, you saints, the sight is glorious,
See the 'Man of Sorrows' now?
From the fight returned victorious,
Every knee to Him shall bow."

You by testifying of Him are promoting the extension of His Kingdom, and doing the best that lies in you to gather together the scattered who are to be the jewels of His crown. Surely the thought of His exaltation fires you with delight—the prospect of magnifying Him, of setting Him on high, and helping to adorn His head, or even to strew the path beneath His feet, must fill your soul with a celestial ardor. Do not forget Him, then, but let the fact that you are in this position today, that you can glorify Jesus, that you can bless the world; let this encourage you to remember your faults this day.

III. In the last place, I have a few things to say by way of COMMENDATION OF THE BUTLER'S REMEMBRANCE.

It is a pity he forgot Joseph, but it is a great blessing that he did not always forget him. It is a sad thing that you and I should have done so little; it is a mercy that there is time left for us to do more. One of our dear friends said this morning, one of our beloved deacons, when I was asking him about some of the Churches he has been to visit—places where we are forming new Churches, what he thought of the work which was going on. "Oh," he said, "it is such a glorious work, and God is so marvelous in it that I wish I were younger that I might live to see more of it." He is not old, but he wished he were much younger that he might see God's gracious work going on for many years as it is now progressing through God's Grace in our midst. Our College is a mighty lever with which the Lord is working, and if God's people knew more of it they would help it more.

I like the butler's remembrance, first of all, because *it was very humbling to him.* He had to say it to Pharaoh, Pharaoh was angry and put his servant in prison. That was not a very pleasant thing for the butler to say to the king, "My Lord, you were angry with me and put me in prison." But though it was a humbling thing, it was very necessary that he should say it and be reminded of it. Let us go before God with the confession, "Lord, I was as base and vile as any; Your Cross saved me; I was an heir of wrath even as others. Jesus did all this for me, blessed be His name, and I humble myself to think that I should so treacherously have forgotten Him who was so kind to me."

I commend his remembrance for another thing, namely, that it was *so personal.* "I do remember *my* faults this day." What capital memories we have for treasuring up other people's faults, for once let us keep to ourselves. Let the confession begin with the minister. *"I* do remember my faults this day." This is not the place for me to tell you of them, though I dare say you see them without any telling of mine, but I *do* remember them. They make a long list. My Brothers in office—the deacons and Elders—I have no charge against them, but I have no doubt they can all say, "I *do* remember my faults this day." You members of this Church, some old and gray, some young beginners, many of you parents and people in middle life, I suppose there is not one of you but what might say—"Yes, I *do* remember my faults this day." Let it go round; do not let there be an exception to the case—let each Christian, instead of thinking about others, make it a personal matter, *"I* do remember my faults this day." I could wish that the unconverted here would join with us. Your fault—the great fault with you—is that you do not believe in Jesus Christ, that you do not trust Him with your souls, but are still strangers to Him. I wish you could say, now, you up in that gallery there, each one of you, "I do remember my faults this day," and the whole body of you down below the stairs, and you around the pulpit, "I do remember my faults this day." It is a good sign of true repentance when it is personal repentance. Every man must mourn apart, and every woman apart; the

husband apart, and the wife apart; the brother apart, and the sister apart. "I do remember my faults this day."

The best part of it, perhaps, was the *practical* nature of the confession. The moment he remembered his fault, he redressed it as far as he could. He could not make up to his poor friend for the days he had been lying in prison, but he spoke to Pharaoh directly. That action was the means of bringing Joseph out. Now, dear Friends, if you remember your faults to the Lord Jesus, may you have Grace not to fall into them again! If you have not spoken for Him, speak today! If you have not given to His cause, give now! If you have not devoted yourselves as you ought to have done to the promotion of His Kingdom, do it now! Oh, Sinner, if you have not believed in Christ, may God the Holy Spirit lead you to believe now! It is of no use remembering a debt if you do not pay it; and it is of no avail to remember a fault if you do not repent of it.

I have little by way of urging you as a congregation to do more in the service of the Master. Often I feel held back by the thought that you are doing so much, but oh, if we could do as much as possible, if every one of us felt pledged, for the Lord's cause and the Redeemer's Kingdom, that there should be nothing within the range of possibility to mortal man that we would not attempt for such a King, for such a Lord, oh, then we should see blessed days. You have had a zealous spirit, you still have it—but you need still more of it, and may God send it to you!

We are helping to send the Gospel throughout all this country, and to different countries abroad as well; do not hold back when God is blessing. Your help is still required; be not slow to render it. Do come forward with us, and help us to magnify the Savior's name till the ends of the earth shall know it, and all nations shall call Him blessed. The Lord bless these words for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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EYES OPENED
NO. 681

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 18, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT WESTBOURNE GROVE CHAPEL, BAYSWATER.

"And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water."
Genesis 21:19.

"And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him."
Luke 24:31.

THE Fall of man was most disastrous in its results to our entire being. "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die," was no idle threat; for Adam did die the moment that he transgressed the command—he died the great spiritual death by which all his spiritual powers became then and evermore, until God should restore them, absolutely dead. I said all the *spiritual* powers, and if I divide them after the analogy of the senses of the body, my meaning will be still more clear. Through the Fall the spiritual *taste* of man became perverted so that he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; he chooses the poison of Hell and loathes the bread of Heaven; he licks the dust of the serpent and rejects the food of angels. The spiritual *hearing* became grievously injured, for man naturally no longer hears God's Word, but stops his ears at his Maker's voice. Let the Gospel minister charm ever so wisely, yet the unconverted soul, like the deaf adder, hears not the charmer's voice. The spiritual feeling by virtue of our depravity is fearfully deadened. That which would once have filled the man with alarm and terror no longer excites emotion. Even the spiritual *smell* with which man should discern between that which is pure and holy, and that which is unsavory to the most High has become defiled, and now man's spiritual nostrils, while unrenewed, derive no enjoyment from the sweet savor which is in Christ Jesus, but seeks after the putrid joys of sin. As with other senses so is it with man's *sight*. He is so spiritually blind that things most plain and clear he cannot and will not see. The understanding, which is the soul's eye, is covered with scales of ignorance, and when these are removed by the finger of instruction, the visual orb is still so affected that it only sees men as trees walking.

Our condition is thus most terrible, but at the same time it affords ample room for a display of the splendors of Divine Grace. Dear Friends, we are so naturally and entirely ruined, that if saved, the whole work must be of God, and the whole Glory must crown the head of the Triune Jehovah. If, indeed, the spiritual eyesight is dim, it is not sufficient for the Lord to open a fountain as He did in Hagar's case; it is not enough

for Christ to come and walk with men as He did in the case of the disciples; our eyes must be opened, or else Hagar will die of thirst with the fountain unseen at her feet, and the disciples will still be pining in sadness after their Savior when that Savior is sitting at the table breaking bread with them. There must not only be a Christ lifted up of whom it can be said, "There is life in a look at the Crucified One," but that very look itself must be given to us, or else in vain should Christ hang upon the Cross; there shall be no salvation by His death to us.

I. Taking HAGAR'S CASE first, I shall address myself this morning to certain unconverted ones who are in a hopeful condition.

1. Taking Hagar's case as the model to work upon, we may see in her and in many like her *a preparedness for mercy.* In many respects she was in a fit state to become an object of mercy's help. She had *a strong sense of need.* The water was spent in the bottle, she herself was ready to faint, and her child lay at death's door; and this sense of need was attended by *vehement desires.* It is a very hard thing to bring a sinner to long after Christ; so hard, that if a sinner does really long and thirst after Jesus, the Spirit of God must have been secretly at work in his soul, begetting and fostering those desires. When the invitation is given, "Ho, everyone who thirsts," you can honestly say, "That means me." That precious Gospel invitation, "Whoever will, let him come," is evidently yours, for you do will eagerly and vehemently. The Searcher of all hearts knows that there is no objection in your heart either to be saved or to the way of being saved; no, rather you sometimes lift your hands to Heaven and say, "O God! Would that I might say, 'Christ for me!'" You know that the Water of Life is desirable; you know more than that, you pine with an inward desire to drink of it. Your soul is now in such a state that if you do not find Jesus you never will be happy without Him. Like Toplady you sing—

"I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me."

God has brought you into such a condition that you are like the magnetized needle which has been turned away from the pole by the finger of some passerby, and it cannot rest until it gets back to its place. Your constant cry is, "Give me Christ! Give me Christ, or else I die!" This is hopeful, but let me remind you that it alone will not save you. The discovery of a leak in a vessel may be preparatory to the pumping of the ship, and to the repair of the leak; but the discovery of the leak will not of itself keep the boat afloat. The fact that you have a fever is well for you to know, but to groan under that fever will not restore you to health. To desire after Christ is a very blessed symptom, but mere desires will not bring you to Heaven. You may be hungering and thirsting after Christ, but hungering and thirsting will not save you; you must have Christ, for your salvation does not lie in your hungering and thirsting, nor in your humbling, nor in your praying—salvation is in Him who died upon the

Cross—and not anything in you. Yet these are hopeful signs, and so far I am thankful.

Like Hagar you are *humbled, and brought to despair.* There was a time when you did not admit your need of a Savior; you found comfort enough in ceremonies, and in your own prayers, repentances, and so on. But now the water is spent in your bottle, and you are sitting down with Hagar wringing your hands and weeping in despair—a blessed despair! God bring you all to it! Despair is next door to confidence in Christ. Rest assured until we are empty, Jesus will never fill us; until we are stripped He will never clothe us; until self is dead Christ will not live in us.

It is quite certain that in Hagar's case *the will* was right enough with reference to the water. It would have been preposterous, indeed, to say to Hagar, "If there is water are you willing to drink?" "Willing?" she would say, "look at my parched lips, hear my dolorous cries, look at my poor panting, dying child; how can you ask a mother if she is willing to have water while her baby is perishing for thirst?" And so with you; if I were to propose to you the question, "Are you willing to be saved?" you might look me in the face and say, "Willing? Oh Sir, I have long passed beyond that stage! I am panting, groaning, thirsting, fainting, dying to find Christ. If He would come to me this morning I would not only open both the gates of my heart and say, 'Come in,' but the gates are opened now before He comes; and my soul is saying, 'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might even come to His seat!'" All this is hopeful, but I must again remind you that to will to be rich does not make a man rich, and that to will to be saved cannot in itself save you. Panting after health does not restore the sick man though it may set him upon using the means, and so he may be healed; and with you, your panting after salvation cannot save you—you must get beyond all this to the great Physician Himself.

2. In the second place, *mercy was prepared* for Hagar, and is prepared for those in a like state. *There was water.* She thought it was a wilderness without a drop for her to drink, but there was water. Troubled Conscience, there is pardon. You think it is all judgment, thunder and thunderbolts, curses and wrath, but it is not so. There is mercy. Jesus died. God is able justly to forgive sinners. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. He is a God ready to pardon, ready to forgive! There is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared. There is water, there is mercy. What is more, there is *mercy for you.* There is not only that general mercy which we are bound to preach to every creature, but for many of you whom I have described, I am persuaded that there is special mercy. Your names are in His Book; He has chosen you from before the foundation of the world, though you do not know it. You shall be His—you ARE His. The hour is not far distant, when, washed in the fountain and made clean, you shall cast yourselves at the Savior's feet, and be His captives in the bonds of love forev-

er. *There is mercy for you now,* if you trust Jesus. The water was not created as a new thing to supply Hagar's thirst, it was there already. *If* she could have seen it she might have had it before, but she could not see it. There is mercy, there is mercy for you. All that is needed is that you should see it, poor troubled Conscience, and if you could have seen it, there would have been no necessity whatever that you should have been so long a time as you have been in despair, and doubt, and fear.

The water was near to Hagar; and so is Christ near to you, my dear Friend, this morning. The mercy of God is not a thing to be sought for up yonder among the stars, nor to be discovered in the depths—it is near you, it is even in your mouth and in your heart. The Savior who walked along the streets of Jerusalem is in these aisles and in these pews this morning; a God ready to forgive, waiting to be gracious. Do not think of my Master as though He had gone up to Heaven out of your reach, and had left no mercy behind Him. Let me tell you that He is as near in spirit now as He was to the disciples when He spoke to them at Emmaus. Oh that you could see Him! He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever." He is passing by; cry to Him, you blind man, and you shall receive your sight! Call to Him, you deaf! Speak, even you whose lips are dumb, His ears can hear your soul's desires. He is near; only believe in His Presence, and trust His Grace, and you shall see Him; but remember, that your seeing Him will not create the Savior nor the salvation; the Savior is here already, and the salvation is even now finished—but your seeing Him by faith will give you joy and comfort. The water in Hagar's case was not only near, *but it was accessible.* She took the bottle and she dipped it in the stream, and filled it to the brim, and gave some to the child to drink. Poor awakened Sinner, mercy is within your reach. God the Holy Spirit has placed you where mercy is within your immediate reach.

It is a notion abroad that the act of faith is very mysterious. Now faith, so far as it is an act of man, (and an act of man it most certainly is, as well as the gift of God, for "with the heart *men* believe"), is one of the simplest acts of the human intellect. To trust Jesus, to lean with the soul upon Him, just as with my body I am leaning on this rail; to make Him all my confidence and all my rest, needs no learning, no previous education, needs no straining or mental effort. It is such an action that the baby and the suckling may glorify God by it. The faith of Sir Isaac Newton, with all his learning, is not a whit more saving or less simple than the faith of the child of three years old, if brought to rest on Christ alone. The moment the dying thief looked to the Crucified and said, "Lord remember me," he was as saved as Paul when he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course." You are saved the moment you trust Christ.

I am very anxious to be understood, and therefore I am trying to speak very simply, and to talk right home to those whom I am driving at. My own case is to the point. I was for some few years, as a child, secretly

seeking Jesus. If ever heart knew what the bitter anguish of sin was, I did, and when I came to understand the plan of salvation by the simple teaching of a plain, illiterate man, the next thought I had after joy that I was saved, was this—"What a fool I was not to trust Jesus Christ before!" I concluded that I never could have heard the Gospel, but I think I was mistaken. I think I must have heard the Gospel thousands of times, but did not understand it. I was like Hagar with my eyes closed. We are bound to tell you every Sunday that trusting Jesus Christ is the way of salvation, but after you have heard that 50,000 times, you really will not even understand what we mean by it till the Spirit of God reveals the secret; but when you do but know it and trust in Jesus, simply as a child would trust his father's word, you will say of yourself, "How could it be? I was thirsty with the water rippling at my feet. I was famishing and perishing for hunger, and the bread was on the table in front of me. I was fretting as though there were no entrance into Heaven, but there stood the door wide open right before me, if I could but have seen it!" Trust yourself to Christ to save you, and He must save you; He never refused to save a single trustful spirit. No, I will improve upon it: "Trust Him, *you are saved."* The moment you begin to live by faith in His dear Son, there is not a sin left in God's Book against you.

3. We pass on, then, in the third place to notice that although Hagar was prepared and mercy was prepared, *yet there was an impediment in the way,* for she could not see the water. There is also an impediment in your way. Hagar had a pair of bright beaming eyes, I will be bound to say, and yet she could not see the water; and men may have first-rate understandings, but not understand that simple thing—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You do not suffer so much from lack of power to understand faith as from a kind of haze which hovers over your eyes to prevent their looking into the right place. You continue to imagine that there must be something very singular for us to feel in order to have Eternal Life. Now this is all a mistake! Simple trust in Jesus has this difficulty in it, that it is not difficult, and therefore the human mind refuses to believe that God can intend to save us by so simple a plan. What blindness is this! So foolish and so fatal! Is not this ignorance partly caused by *legal terrors?* Master Bunyan, who had a keen insight into spiritual experience, says that Christian was so troubled with the burden on his back, that in running he did not look well enough to his steps. Therefore, being much tumbled up and down in his own mind, as he says, he also tumbled into the Slough of Despond. You may have heard the thunder of God's Law so long that you cannot hear anything so soft and sweet as the invitation of the loving Jesus. "Come and welcome! Come and welcome!" is unheard because of the din of your sins.

The main reason I think, however, why some do not attain early to peace is because they are *looking for more than they will get,* and thus their eyes are dazzled with fancies. You have been reading of somebody's

life, and you have said, "I should like to feel like that man," so you will one of these days, but you must not hope to be like that man before you are saved. You who dare not take Christ because you are not a full-grown Christian, be content to be a baby first; be satisfied to go through the seed state, and the blade state, and the ear state, and then you will get to be the full corn in the ear. Be content to begin with Christ and with Christ, alone. I verily believe some of you expect that you will experience a great shock, or a superhuman delirium of horror. You have an idea that to be born-again is something to make the flesh creep or the bones shiver—an indescribable sensation, quite out of the compass of human feeling. Now believe me, that to be born-again involves the ending of superstition and living by feeling, and brings you into the world of plain and simple truth where fools need not err. "Whoever believe in Him is not condemned." If you can understand that and claim it as your own, you are born-again; but though you should understand all human mysteries, if you are not born-again you could not truly understand that simplest of all teachings, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved."

Again, I am afraid some persons with the water at their feet, do not drink it because of the *bad directions* that are given by ministers. When a minister closes up an address to the unconverted with this exhortation—"Now, my dear Friends, go home and pray," that is a very right exhortation; but it is given to the wrong people, and in the wrong place. I do not say to you this morning, I *dare* not say to you, as though it were the Gospel message, "Go home and pray." I hope you will pray! But there is another matter to come before prayer, namely, *faith in Jesus.* When Christ told His disciples to go and preach the Gospel to every creature, He did not say to them, "He that prays shall be saved," though that would be true if he prayed aright, but Christ said, "he who *believes* shall be saved." Your present duty is not praying, but *believing*. You are to look to Jesus Christ upon the Cross just as the poor serpent-bitten Israelites looked to the bronze serpent and lived. Your praying will not do you a farthing's worth of good if you refuse to trust Jesus Christ. When you have trusted Jesus Christ, prayer will become your breath, your native air—you will not be able to live without it; but prayer, if put in the place of a child-like trust in Jesus, becomes an antichrist. It is not going to places of worship, or Bible reading which saves. I am not depreciating these duties, but I am putting them in their proper position. It is depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ alone which is the true vital act by which the soul is quickened into spiritual life. If you, trusting in Christ, do not find peace and pardon, the Gospel which I preach is a lie, and I will renounce it; but then the Bible would be false, also, for it is from that Book my message comes. This is the Gospel which we have received, and which Christ has sent us to preach—that whoever believes in Him is not condemned.

Now why do you hurry about after this and that? Why follow this man's and that man's directions? Why look to your baptism and confirmation? Why do you go about to your Church-goings and your Chapel-goings, your Bible-readings, and your praying, your good works about this and about the other—they are all but dross and dung if you put them in the place of Christ! But Christ Jesus, if you rest on Him, is precious, and after your receive Him, your works and your prayers shall become precious too, because they will be performed through faith in Him; but until you come to Him, they are all nothing and vanity, unacceptable in the sight of God, because you put them into the place which should be occupied by the Savior.

4. I feel certain that there are some here upon whom the Lord intends to work this morning—so we will speak, in the fourth place, upon *the Divine removal of the impediment*. Hagar's blindness was removed *by God*. No one else could have removed it. God must open a man's eyes to understand practically what belief in Jesus Christ is. That simple Truth of God—salvation by trust in Jesus Christ—still remains a point too difficult to be seen; until the whole power of Omnipotence is made to bear upon the intellect, man does not really comprehend it. But while this was Divinely removed, it *was removed instrumentally*. An angel spoke out of Heaven to Hagar. It matters little whether it is an angel or a man—*it is the Word of God* which removes the difficulty. Dear Friend, I pray that the Word of God may remove your unbelief. May you see today the light of Jesus Christ by simply trusting Him. I believe there are some who are saved who still are afraid they will be lost; I have heard of a butcher who at his work was accustomed to put his candle in a little candlestick which was tied by a belt around his forehead. One day he needed his candle in his hand, and he looked all around his slaughterhouse for it by the light of the candle on his forehead. He looked about everywhere to find it and, of course, he could not have looked at all if he had not had the light which he looked for already. Many a man is looking within himself to see the evidence of Divine Grace when his anxiety, and the very light by which he looks ought to be sufficient evidence. I hope there are many of you who are just on the verge of salvation without knowing it.

I looked last Friday night at a very remarkable sight, the burning of a huge rug factory. I was returning home from my Master's work, when I saw a little blaze, and in an incredibly short time a volume of fire rolled up in great masses to the skies! Why did it blaze so suddenly? Why, because for months before many men had been busily employed in hanging up the rugs, and saturating the building in combustible materials. I do not mean with the intention of starting a fire, but in the ordinary course of their work, and in due time, when the first spark came, it immediately grew into a great sheet of flames. So, sometimes, when the Gospel is faithfully preached, a sinner gets present peace and pardon, and he is so full of joy his friends cannot make him out, his progress is so rapid. But

remember that God has been mysteriously at work months before in that man's heart, preparing his soul to catch the heavenly flame, so that there was only a spark needed, and then up rolled the flames to Heaven! Oh that I could be that spark to some heart in whom God has been working this morning, but HE alone can make me so. I noticed when that factory was on fire from top to bottom, that it seemed to glow like pure gold, or like transparent glass, and then I expected to see it fall, and by-and-by fall it did, for after about half-an-hour, all of a sudden, one timber went over and the whole mass fell with a tremendous crash!

I venture to compare that final crash with the actual salvation of a soul long prepared by God's Grace to receive it. The heart has been glowing with a Divine desire, a heavenly flame for even months and years, and then at last in a moment the final movement is made, and doubts and fears and sins fall to the ground, and there is room to build a Temple for the living God. May it be so with you this morning! There has been much preparatory work in you, for you are brought to long after the Savior, and you are desirous to be saved by Him. There He is! Take Him! Take Him! The cup of water is put before you. Drink it! No need to wash your mouth first, or to change your garments. Drink it at once! Come to Jesus as you are!—

"Come and welcome, sinner, come!"

II. Oh that the Spirit of God would give me power from on high while I try to talk to the saints from the second case—that of the disciples in Luke 24:31. This is no Hagar, but "Cleopas and another disciple." And yet these two suffered under the same spiritual blindness as Hagar, though not, of course, in the same phase of it. Carefully observe the case of these disciples, for I believe it is often our own. *They ought to have known Jesus* for these reasons. *They were acquainted with Him,* they had been with Him for years in public and in private, they had heard His voice so often that they ought to have remembered its tones. They had gazed upon that marred face so frequently that they ought to have distinguished its features. They had been admitted into His privacy, and they ought to have known His habits. That Savior walking there ought not to have been *incognito* to them though He was to the rest of men. So it is with us. Perhaps you have not found Jesus Christ lately. You have been to His Table, and you have not met Him there; you are in a dark trouble this morning, and though He says, "It is I, be not afraid," yet you cannot see Him there. Brothers and Sisters, we ought to know Christ, we ought to discover Him at once. We know His voice, we have heard Him say, "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away." We have looked into His face, we have understood the mystery of His grief, we have leaned our head upon His bosom. Some of you have had an experience of 15 or 20 years, some of 40 or 50 years; and yet, though Christ is near, you do not know Him this morning, and you are saying, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!"

They ought to have known Him because *He was close to them*. He was walking with them along the same road, he was not up on a mountain at a distance. Even then they ought to have known Him, for He was there in the same way with them; and at this hour Jesus is very near to us, sympathizing with all our griefs—

"In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows has His part."

He bears and endures with us still, though now exalted on Glory's Throne in Heaven. If He is here, we ought to know Him. If He is close to His people every day and in all their affliction is afflicted, we ought to perceive Him. Oh, what poor vision is this, that Christ should be near, our own Well-Beloved Redeemer, and yet we should not be able to detect His Presence!

They ought to have seen Him because *they had the Scriptures to reflect His Image*, and yet how possible it is for us to open that precious Book and turn over page after page of it, and not see Christ. They talked concerning Christ from Moses to the end of the Prophets, and yet they did not see Jesus. Dear Child of God, are you in that state? He feeds among the lilies of the Word, and you are among those lilies, and yet you do not see Him. He is accustomed to walk through the glades of Scripture and to commune with His people, as the Father did with Adam in the cool of the day, and yet you are in the Garden of Scripture but cannot see your Lord, though He is there and is never absent. What is more, these disciples ought to have seen Jesus, *for they had the Scriptures opened to them*. They not only heard the Word, but they understood it. I am sure they understood it, *for their hearts burned within them* while He spoke with them by the way. I have known what it is, and so have you, to feel our hearts burn when we have been thinking of the precious Truth of God, and yet we have said, "Oh that I could get at *Him!"* You have heard of Election, and you have wondered to yourself whether you should ever see again the face of God's first Elect One. You have heard of the Atonement, and the mournful story of the Cross has ravished you, but you have gone from page to page of Scripture Doctrine, and have received it and felt its influence, and yet that best of all enjoyments, communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, you have not comfortably possessed.

There was another reason why the disciples ought to have seen Him, namely that *they had received testimonies from others about Him.* "But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain women of our company, which were early at the sepulcher, made us astonished, for when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive." There He was close to them. Oh, it is so strange that in the ordinances of God's house Jesus should be there, and yet in sad intervals our hearts should get so cold and so worldly that we cannot see Him. It is a blessed thing to want to see Him, but oh, it is better still to see Him. To those

who seek Him He is sweet; but to those who find Him, He is dear beyond expression. In the Prayer Meeting you have heard some say, "If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now," and your hearts burned within you as they thus spoke, and yet you could not say the same yourself. You have been up in the sick-chamber, and you have heard the dying saint sing—

"***I will love You in life, I will love You in death,***
And praise You as long as You lend me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."

You have envied that dying saint because you could not just then feel the same confident love; well this is strange, passing strange, it is amazing—a present Savior, present with His own disciples who have long known Him, and who long to see Him, and yet their eyes are shut so that they cannot discover Him. Why do we not see Him? I think it must be ascribed in our case to the same as in theirs, namely, *our unbelief*. They evidently did not expect to see Him, and therefore they did not discover Him. Brothers and Sisters, to a great extent in spiritual things we shall get what we expect. The ordinary preacher of the Gospel does not expect to see present conversions, and he does not; but there are certain Brothers I have known who have preached with the full faith that God would convert souls, and souls have been converted. Some saints do not expect to see Christ. They read the life of Madame Guyon, and her soul-enchanting hymns, and they say, "Ah, this was a blessed woman." They take down the letters of Samuel Rutherford, and when they read them through, they say, "Enchanting epistles! A strange, marvelously good man was this." It does not enter into their heads that they may be as Madam Guyon, and that they may have as much nearness to Christ, and as much enjoyment as Samuel Rutherford. We have got into the habit of thinking the saints gone by stand up in elevated niches for us to stare at them with solemn awe, and fancy that we can never attain to their elevation. Brothers and Sisters, they are elevated, certainly, but they beckon us to follow them, and point to a something beyond! They invite us to outstrip them, to get greater nearness to Christ, a clearer sense of His love, and a more ravishing enjoyment of His Presence. You do not expect to see Christ, and therefore you do not see Him, not because He is not there to be seen, but because your eyes are shut through your unbelief! I do not know any reason why we should not be full of joy this morning; every believing soul among us.

Why hang those harps on the willows, Beloved? You have a trial, you say. Yes, but Jesus is in it! He says, "When you pass through the rivers, I will be with you, the floods shall not overflow you." Why not rejoice then, since the dear Shepherd is with you? What matters it though there are clouds? They are full of rain when He is there, and they shall empty themselves upon the earth. Up, my Brothers and Sisters, up! With everything that may discourage and cast you down, you have 10 times as much to encourage and lift you up! He loved you, and gave Himself for

you; His blood has cleansed you; His righteousness has clothed you; His Grace has decked you with jewels. This world and the world to come are yours, and Christ who is better than both worlds is yours forever and ever! Take down those harps and strike the strings with glad fingers, and wake them into melodies of joy!

Now, dear Friends, I am sure it is the duty of every Christian, as well as his privilege, to walk in the conscious enjoyment of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ; and it may be that you came here on purpose that you might begin such a walk. The disciples had walked a long way without knowing Christ, but when they sat at His Table, it was the breaking of bread that broke the evil charm, and they saw Jesus clearly at once. Do not neglect that precious ordinance of the breaking of bread! There is much more in it than some suppose. Sometimes when the preaching of the Word affords no joy, the breaking of bread might—and when reading the Word does not yield consolation, a resort to the Lord's Table might be the means of comfort. It may even happen that some other neglected means may be that which God intends to bless to your soul. I am afraid many of God's servants are in darkness because they have neglected known duties. The windows of Christ's palace are many, and He would not have one of them blocked up; and if you block up one window, it may be that He will say, "I will never show My face at any but that. I will make My servants take down that shutter, that the Light of God may shine through." There is nothing in any ordinance of itself, but there may be much sin in your neglecting it. There is nothing, for instance, in the ordinance of Believers' Baptism, and yet, knowing it to be a prescribed duty in God's Word, it may be that the Lord will never give you a comfortable sense of His Presence till you yield to your conscience in that matter. But, waiving all that point, what you need is to see Him! Faith alone can bring you to see Him. Make it your prayer this morning, "Lord, open my eyes that I may see my Savior present with me, and after once seeing Him may I never let Him go. From this day forth may I begin, like Enoch, to walk with You, and may I continue walking with You till I die, that I may then dwell with You forever." I find it very easy to get near to God compared with what it is to stay near. Enoch walked with God 400 years; what a long walk that was! What a splendid journey through life! Why should you not begin, dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, today, if you have not begun, and walk with God through the few years which remain?

What if God should spare you for 40 years? I do not see that there is any necessity that your communion with God should be broken from now till death or the Lord's coming. "Yes," you say, "you talk in a Utopian fashion!" Perhaps I do, but I believe that high-toned Christian experience is to a great extent what common Christians think to be out of their reach. Oh to get up above yon mists which dim the valley! Oh to climb the mountain's top which laughs in the sunlight! Oh to get away from the heavy atmosphere of worldliness and doubt, of fear, of care, of fretful-

ness—to soar away from the worldlings who are always earth-hunting, digging into its mines, and prying after its treasures—and to get up there where God dwells in the innermost circle of heavenly seclusion, to get where none can live but men who have been quickened from among the dead; where none can walk but men who are crucified with Christ, and who live only in Him. Oh to get up there where no more question concerning our security can molest us; where no carking care can disturb because all is cast upon the Lord and rests wholly with Him! Oh to live in such an entireness of confidence and child-like faith that we will have nothing to do with anything except with serving Him and showing forth the gratitude we owe to Him who has done so much for us!

Get up, Believers! Get up to your high mountain! Leave your dunghills and assume your thrones! Cast off your sackcloth! Throw away your ashes and put on your scarlet apparel! Christ has called you to fellowship with Himself, and He is no longer in the grave—He is risen! Rise! He is ascended! Ascend with Him and learn what this means, "He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus! I know you will say you cannot see this. However, it is there, most surely there! It is just the same as in Hagar's case, with you, the same but with a difference. The fullness of fellowship with Christ is attainable, is close to you, and if you have your eyes opened to see it, as it has been given you to see Jesus as your Savior, you may rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. God do so to you and more also according to His Covenant goodness in Christ Jesus. Amen and Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
GENESIS 21:9-19; LUKE 24:13-31

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NO. 682

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 25, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
Hebrews 10:31.

You will most cheerfully bear me witness that my most frequent subjects are the mercy and abundant loving kindness of our God in Jesus Christ, and that it is my favorite employment to invite the very chief of sinners to come to Jesus Christ with the assurance that He will cast out none who come to Him, but will assuredly give to them Eternal Life. It is not to my honor to say so, but still you know how seldom I have forced upon your attention those terrible subjects which concern the state of the lost in Hell. I have felt more at home in using the drawing of mercy than the driving of terror, and I can most honestly plead innocence of any charge of delighting in declaring the torments of the finally impenitent, or of entering upon the discussion of the miseries of the lost with eagerness and enjoyment. He who searches all hearts knows that under an overwhelming sense of urgency and necessity, and purely out of love to the souls of men I bring before you the text which I have announced. The burden of the Lord hangs heavily upon me; I must deliver myself of the blood of some of you who are living in impenitence, and who will probably die in it, and who, if you die unwarned, having often listened to my voice, may be able to reproach me in another world if I do not faithfully and earnestly bear my solemn testimony concerning the wrath to come. Beloved, we know by observation in our pastoral work that while the Mercy of God draws many to Him, there are some who are more affected at first by the terrors of the Law. We have many now, who are members of this Church walking in holiness and in the fear of God, who listened to sermons upon the softer and more tender topics, and were not affected, but when they came under the heavy blows of the hammer of God's Law, their flinty hearts were broken into shivers and, by God's Grace, before long they turned unto the hand which smote them! God has ordained both the terrors of the Law and the tenderness of the Gospel, that by means of both, men may be saved.

Gospel farming employs many implements, and there are some lands which will never yield a harvest without much more exercising with the plow than others may require. The light of Tabor and the fiery flashes of Sinai are equally Divine, and as long as we learn to rest in Calvary it little matters by what means, whether tender or terrible, we may have been brought there. The complete ministry leaves no revealed Truth of God unuttered, but looks for a blessing upon the Word as a whole. The themes of Mercy need, in order fully to manifest their brightness, the dark background of the terrors of the Law, for men will never value a Redeemer as well as when they have a very clear consciousness of the ruin from which He has redeemed them. The preciousness of God's Mercy is best known by those who discern the terror of His Justice. If we

really feel that God is angry with the sinner, and loathes and hates his sin, and will certainly take fearful vengeance upon him on account of it, we shall the better understand the force of that Divine Mercy which led Him to give His own dear Son, and which now leads Him to cry unto the Sons of men, "Turn! Turn! Why will you die, O house of Israel?"

In addition to these considerations, I have been urged to bring this subject before you because the assaults which are now made against the Gospel frequently assail the Doctrine of Future Punishment. It was once the business of infidels to revile the terrible sanctions of the Divine Law; but they may now suspend their exertions, for certain clergymen of the Church of England are doing the work most effectually; no, more—there are certain Dissenting ministers, successors of good and venerable men, who are never more at home than when they are making sport of the terrors of God. Just now it seems to jump with the humor of certain philosophic schools to depreciate our God as a Judge, and to magnify a supposed Divine Fatherhood which is the offspring of their own effeminate imaginations and flesh-pleasing dreams; it therefore behooves the servants of the Most High and Righteous God to confess the faith which they have received and not be ashamed of it, whatever disgrace may cover them.

I. The text asserts that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," and our first statement shall be, that SURELY IT IS SO; as we may certainly gather from several considerations.

1. It must be a fearful thing for impenitent sinners to fall into God's hands when we remember the Character of God as revealed in His judgments of old. Taking the Scriptures as our guide, we see in them a Revelation of God differing very greatly from that which is so current today. The God of Abraham, as revealed in the Old Testament, is as different from the universal Father of modern dreams as He is from Apollo or Bacchus. Let me remind you that ever since the day when Adam fell, with but two exceptions, the whole of the human race has been subjected to the pains of sickness and of *death*. If you would behold the severity of Him who judges all the earth, you have only to remember that this whole world has been for ages a vast burying place. Men whine out their abhorrence of God's Justice, and reject the idea of future punishment with the question, "Would a father do thus-and-thus with his children?" The question needs no other reply than fact. All men die. Would a father allow his children to pine in sickness and die when it was in his power to prevent it? Certainly not. Since, then, the great God evidently permits much pain, and even death to happen to His creatures, He is evidently not merely Father, but something more. To ungodly men Jehovah reveals Himself in the light of a Judge; and a Judge, too, whose stern severity has brought to pass the terrible doom of death upon every man of woman born, with two exceptions, from the Fall of Adam even until now. This is the God of Love; but not the newly-devised god who is love and love alone.

Our business is not to think out our own idea of what God should be, but to find out, as far as we can, what God really is. Let me then remind you of the deluge. When the world was covered with inhabitants, and according to the computation of some, owing to the longevity of man, with a population more numerous than the present which crowds it,

(however that is not a material point in the question), when the world was covered with inhabitants, and these had sinned, God destroyed all flesh from off the face of the earth with the exception of eight souls, whom in His Sovereignty He saved in the Ark. Can you picture to yourself the horrors of that tremendous day, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the rains descended from on high? Here were millions of creatures like ourselves destroyed at a blow! Can you hear their shrieks and cries? Do you see them clambering in fright to the mountaintops? Do you behold them struggling for existence amidst the devouring flood? Can you hear the cries of the last strong swimmers in their agony? Who does all this? It is that God who so hates sin that, though He is Infinite Love—and we would never detract from that attribute—He is also Infinite Justice and will by no means spare the guilty.

Do not imagine that He who thus destroyed the world with a flood was never at any other time equally severe. Let me show you the dreadful picture of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain. Those cities were filled with inhabitants, happy and cheerful like ourselves. They found their happiness, however, in sin, and their sin had so provoked God to anger, that after a personal visit to the spot what did He do? You who believe in effeminate personification of shallow benevolence, turn here your blind eyes if perhaps the fire which fell from Heaven may yield you some ray of light. Can you see the dwellers of those cities when the fiery hail begins to fall? In vain were their cries, in vain their tears, the burning sleet pitilessly descends until one dreadful sheet of flame enwraps the sky, and all the men, women, and children of the plain are consumed before the terrible wrath of the Most High. What do you think of this scene of horror? And what of those words of Peter where he speaks of God who, turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, and made them an example unto those who after should live ungodly?

Let me direct your eyes to Egypt. You read the story of the slaying of the first-born in one night, and it does not strike you with horror; but only conceive of the first-born throughout all London dying in one night—what a visitation that would be! The whole of Egypt, it is to be believed, contained far more inhabitants than London, and yet without regarding Egypt's bitter cry which He foreknew would ring in His ears, that God who revenges and is terrible slew in one night the chief of all their strength. Don't forget the destruction at the Red Sea. Pharaoh and his hosts descended into the midst of the sea and perished there. You rejoice, and rightly so, because Israel was preserved, but what a fearful thing it was that Egypt should be destroyed! Pharaoh and all the chivalry of Mizraim swallowed up by the waves, to be mourned by innumerable widows and orphans. Do I hear anybody accusing our God of cruelty on account of this? And why not, if the new benevolence theory is true? Let those who accuse the Infinite Jehovah beware! Let them strive with their fellow potsherds, but strive not with the rod of iron! Jehovah needs none of our defenses. O amazing God! Little does it matter to You what man's judgment of You may be, for with You the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers! You do as You will, and Your judgments are past finding out.

Think of the slaughter of the Canaanites. Palestine was filled with Hivites, Jebusites, and other nations; all these were given to the edge of the sword by God's express command. Dispute the Bible and you may get rid of this, but believe it and you have that terrible fact before you—that He gave a whole population to unmitigated slaughter; and, I believe, justly and rightly so. I profess not to understand the ways of God; who am I that I should understand Him? Should the potter's vessel think of understanding the potter? I bow before what He does, and believe that He is just let Him do whatever He may.

There is no need to detain you over the terrible spectacle of thousands smitten by pestilence at the time of David's numbering of the people. Or of Sennacherib's hosts slain in one night by God's own hand, or even over that direst of all judgments—the destruction of Jerusalem! But I cannot forbear quoting the memorable words of Moses when he said of Jehovah, "He repays them who hate Him to their face, to destroy them: He will not be slack to him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face" (Deut 7:10). Well does our Jehovah deserve the title which Isaiah gives Him, "The Lord who renders recompense to His enemies" (Isa 66:6). What instances does the Scripture give of what Paul calls "the severity of God," and how true is it that, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"!

2. Pursuing our heavy task, we shall now draw your solemn attention to *the words of the Savior.* Our Lord Jesus Christ we believe to be the Incarnation of God, and to represent our God under a most tender aspect. It is a very remarkable fact that no Inspired preacher of whom we have any record ever uttered such terrible words concerning the destiny of the lost as our Lord Jesus Christ. You may search the Scriptures through, but you will not find more solemnly alarming expressions than those which the loving Jesus employed. Now, Sinner, that you may feel their power, instead of quoting them hurriedly, let me just remind you of them slowly and solemnly. It was that tender Savior who still cries, "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It was also He who said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell" (Matt 10:28). Read in Matthew 13:41—turn to the passage and read it with your own eyes that you may feel its power more—"The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." He repeats that expression in the 49th verse. "So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." In the same Gospel, in the 22nd Chapter, you will find words equally suggestive in the 13th verse—"Then said the King to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And so again He says of the unprofitable servant in the 25th Chapter of Matthew, which Chapter also records those dreadful words, which it is well for us to read as we find them at the 41st verse—"Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And

as if this were not enough, Jesus closes His discourse with these words at the end of the Chapter, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Who was it who uttered that fearful sentence written in the Ninth of Mark at the 43rd verse? Let it duly affect you as you read it—"If your hand offends you, cut it off: it is better for you to enter into life maimed than having two hands to go into Hell, into the fire which never shall be quenched: where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched."

Did Jesus say that once? Read the 46th verse "Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." Did He only say it twice? Look at the 48th verse—"Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." Three times over in one discourse! Do not complain of the preacher if you think him harsh. Oh Beloved, he does not wish to be harsh, but to preach with tears in his eyes these dreadful things—but look at my Master, the Lord Jesus Christ! Did He preach smooth things on this matter? We heard the other day that the unquenchable fire and the undying worm were mediaeval ideas to be scoffed at in these enlightened times! A courtly preacher insinuated as much and more—but a greater than he, who wore no soft raiment and dwelt in no king's palaces, uses such expressions unmodified and undiluted! I pray you laugh not at them, and scoff not at them, for the lips that spoke them were the lips of Him who loved the souls of men even to the death; the lips of Him who shall come a second time to judge the quick and the dead.

My terrible list is very far from being exhausted. Look at the 20th Chapter of Luke and the 18th verse, and the 18th Chapter of Matthew and the 8th and 9th verses. But still more memorable is that parable of Lazarus and the rich man. The punishment of Dives is not described in terms of gentleness; he cries, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." Abraham gives him no hope of escape from his misery, for the answer to the inquiry is, "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from here to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from there." Oh, mournful picture, but Jesus drew it! He it was who told us of a certain sinner, it were better for that man that he had never been born, and of others, that it were better for them that a millstone were hung about their necks, and that they were cast into the depths of the sea. He it is who describes certain sinners as being miserably destroyed, and in another place uses this fearful sentence which I confess, although it is figurative, makes me shiver as I utter it, "The master of that servant will come in a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" (Luke 12:46). Do not talk about grim mediaeval expressions after this; this is the Master Himself, and these are His own words, and I dare to say it that all the glowing pictures ever painted designed to compel souls to escape from Hell never reached the dread reality which is implied in the words of our Savior, Jesus Christ. I hope that perceiving these terrors to have come from the lips of Jesus, who is all Love, Kindness, and Benevolence, you will understand that it is the highest benevolence to warn men of their danger, and to exhort them to

escape from the wrath which will surely come upon them, for "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

3. We feel that it must be a fearful thing to be punished for sin when you remember the Atonement. It is our full belief as Christians, that, in order to the pardon of human sin, it was necessary that God Himself should become Incarnate, and that the Son of God should suffer—suffer excruciating pains—to which the dignity of His Person added infinite weight. Brothers and Sisters, if the Wrath of God is a mere trifle, there was no need of a Savior to deliver us; it were as well to have let so small a matter take its course; or, if the Savior came merely to save us from a pinch or two, why is so much said in His praise? What need for Heaven and earth to ring with the glories of Him who would save us from a small mischief? But mark the word. As the sufferings of the Savior were intense beyond all conception, and as no less a Person than God Himself must endure these sufferings for us, that must have been an awful, not to say an infinite evil from which there was no other way for us to escape except by the bleeding and dying of God's dear Son. Think lightly of Hell, and you will think lightly of the Cross. Think little of the sufferings of lost souls, and you will soon think little of the Savior who delivers you from them. God grant we may not live to see such a Christ-dishonoring theology dominant in our times.

4. But once again, and with this we close this point. The conscience of every sinner tells him that there will be a wrath to come. I do not mean that the conscience of the sinner tells him what kind of punishment it will be, or dictates to him its duration, but we know from facts that dying men who have lived in impenitence have often exhibited fears that are not to be accounted for except upon the supposition that the shadow of a terrible doom had cast itself upon their minds. These were not the old women of whom so much has been said in the way of despising them. These have been strong men once as boastful as Tom Paine and his fellows; these were men of intellect, sharp intellects, who once threatened to strike the Gospel through the heart; and yet when they have come to die their boasts have all ceased, and the blanched cheek and the terror of the wrath to come have all proved the truth of what they denied, and have declared that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." I am sure we all feel—at least I speak of my own conscience—I feel that God could not be truly God if He did not punish evil; that it would be a pity that there should be a God if He did not punish sin; that He might as well have had no Existence at all if such were the fact, and that if a preacher should arise who would tell men that God would not punish their sins, such a man ought to be carefully secluded from society because of the mischief which his doctrines would assuredly cause.

I feel like the judge in America, who when he was waited upon by the Universalists for assistance in setting up a place for their meeting, after hearing the arguments, said, "No, I cannot help you; for, in the first place, I do not believe that your doctrines are at all consistent with Holy Writ, and though I am sorry to say I am not as well instructed in the Bible as I ought to be, I believe that if Scripture had meant to teach eternal punishment, I do not see what other terms it could have used. At all events, if your sentiments should prevail, if there is no Hell hereafter, there would very soon be a Hell here; for as soon as it were known that

men might commit sin with impunity, men would plunge into sin at once." The moral sense of man is not stamped out yet, and while it remains it will in more or less distinct terms declare that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

II. Let me urge you, my dear Hearer, in the second place, NOT TO ATTEMPT TO DEPRIVE YOURSELF OF THE BENEFICIAL EFFECT WHICH A PROPER CONSIDERATION OF THIS DOCTRINE WOULD HAVE UPON YOU.

1. Do not deny the fact, at any rate if you do, be consistent and deny Scripture altogether. If you doubt the punishment of the future state, doubt the Inspiration of Scripture at once, for to doubt one and hold the other is impossible. Do not so violate your own conscience as to dream of sin's escaping punishment. If you should persuade yourself to doubt the existence of Hell, your doubting it will not quench its fires. If there is no Hell hereafter I am as well off as you are, but if there is, where will *you* be? Take it on the most common supposition, I have two strings to my bow, you have only one, and that one I believe to be a lie. Oh, my Hearers, if I were to stand here and persuade you that there was no danger, you might very well say, "Then why need you tell us so? Why be in earnest when there is nothing to be in earnest about?"

2. In the next place, do not have the edge of this Truth of God taken off by those who suggest a hope that though you may be punished for a time in the next world you will ultimately be destroyed and annihilated. Now nothing in nature ever has been annihilated yet, and it would be a new thing if you should be. I am not about to argue the point this morning, but I pray you do not let the terrors of the wrath to come be taken off by that idea, for even supposing it to be true, yet those who teach it tell us that there will be a limited but a very fearful punishment; they still agree with the teaching of the text, that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." If I knew that I would be damned for a day, I would labor to escape from it; but to be damned for a thousand years will be terrible indeed, and it would still be true that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." I dare not, however, hold out to you the hope of annihilation while the Bible contains such words as these—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment"—*everlasting!* The word is precisely the same as that which is applied to Heaven, and though I shall be told that this is an old argument, I reply that this is the very reason why I use it. Be it for others to invent novelty; we count that the old is better. If that passage does not teach the eternity of punishment, neither does it teach the eternity of reward.

It is to be always *punishment* too—always *punishment*. Now if the lost should suddenly be annihilated, that annihilation would be no punishment; it would be a gift to be sought with tears. It would be the cessation of all punishment, for how can they be punished who have ceased to be? The *punishment* spoken of is said to be everlasting, and everlasting it will be! In the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the First Chapter and 7th and 9th verses, we are told that such men shall be punished with *eternal destruction.* Some lay hold upon the word "destruction" as meaning annihilation, but it is *eternal destruction*. Annihilation is done at once and done with, but this destruction lasts on

forever. It is eternal destruction, and then it is explained, "eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and the Glory of His power." Therefore to be forever banished from the Glory of God and shut out from every source of hope is the destruction here meant. There is a very terrible passage in the 20th Chapter of Revelation where in vision John speaks concerning the condition of lost spirits. If you read the 10th verse speaking of Gog and Magog, it says, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the Lake of Fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." I do not know what the words forever and ever can mean if they do *not* mean forever and ever. Yes, cries one, that torment is for the devil. Very well, why do you not sympathize with the devil as well as with men? Is not there as much reason to sympathize with fallen angels as with fallen men?

But our Lord has said that the same punishment which awaits Satan will befall the impenitent, for He says, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And in the last verse of the 20th Chapter of Revelation we find, that whoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire—that same place into which Death and Hell were cast. This fire will not cause annihilation, for in Revelation 21:8 we are told that certain sinners, such as the "fearful and unbelieving, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone." How can those have a part who have no existence? To have a part in that fire is the Second Death. When Jesus speaks of the fire of Hell, He does not say that annihilation is effected by it, but speaks on this wise: "shall cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be (not annihilation, but the signs of *conscious* misery) weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Now I am not going fully into this subject, but I can only say this much—if our Lord and His Spirit intended to make us believe that there would be a worm that never dies, and a fire that never could be quenched, and did mean to teach us that there was a punishment for sin which would last forever, I do not know what other words could have been used; and I do pray, dear Friends, whether you think so or not, be on the safe side; for even if it were but a thousand years only, think what that must be. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, even if you could get out again; but when it comes with the solemn sanction, as I am persuaded it does, that you will never escape from those hands, oh, why will you die? Why will you die? Look, look to Jesus, and find Eternal Life in Him! Beware lest you be "wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

3. Some suppose that instead of annihilation, restoration awaits the lost. There are no texts in Scripture which when read by honest men, can mean this—they must be wickedly and perniciously perverted before they can be made to teach anything of the sort. Scripture does not speak of the fire of Hell as chastening and purifying, but as punishment which men shall receive for deeds done in the body. They are to be visited with many stripes and receive just recompense for transgressions. What can there be about Hell fire to change a man's heart? Surely the more the lost will suffer the more they will hate God. When God sent plagues upon the earth men blasphemed His name (Rev 16:9). Men do so now. Are they

likely to turn at His rebuke then? Satan has been punished for these 6,000 years—do you see any signs of repentance about him? Do you see any tokens of his being reclaimed? Is he not just as much a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour, as ever he was? And the case of Satan must run parallel with ours. There are no tokens of his restoration now, nor will there be any tokens of ours then. Besides, if the Gospel of Christ cannot save you, what can? If the wooing of Christ's wounds cannot make you love Christ, do you think the flames of Hell will? Oh, my Hearers, if, with such a Gospel as that which is proclaimed to you, you will not turn, do you think you will turn in the world to come? Jesus says not so, but declares that, "he who believes not shall be damned." You live in the company of saints now—at all events, you live in a land which represses immorality, but in Hell there are no preachers of the Gospel—no holy examples to win you to holiness; the dwellers in Hell are enemies of God—a pretty school for virtue that!

Do you suppose, then, that you who leave this life without the fear of God will be led to turn to Him then? Cast away the thought, my Hearer, it will deceive you. This fearful Doctrine did much mischief in America at one time, but it was so revolting to the common sense of many consciences that its day was soon over. This error will eat out the very soul of piety. Still, were it true, Believers in Jesus are as well off as you are. A gentleman once said to a Universalist who had been arguing with him, "I suppose if I hate your religion, laugh at it, ridicule it, and spit on it, it will be all the same with me at the last?" "Yes," said the other. "Well," said the first, "mind you do not do that with mine, or you are a lost man." I like the remark of the people who were requested to accept one of these preachers as ministers. They said, "You have come to tell us that there is no Hell. If your doctrine is true, we certainly do not need you; and if it is not true, we do not want you—so that, either way, we can do without you." It is a most dreadful fact that there is no provision made for the future restoration of the lost; not a word said about it except that for them remains the blackness of darkness forever.

Abraham did not say to the rich man, "My dear son, you will return to my bosom when you have undergone those purifying fires." Oh, no! That would have been something more than a drop of water to cool his tongue; that would have drenched him with buckets full of the cooling draught. But no, it was just this: "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed so that they which would pass from here to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from there."

4. Some ungodly men say, "Well, you do not believe for a minute that there is any material fire, do you?" My dear Hearer, what is that to you? There is a text which speaks of destroying both body and soul in Hell, which seems to indicate punishment for the body; but if it were not so, do you think that soul punishment is a trifle? Why, it is the very soul of punishment! It is far more dreadful than bodily pain. Go across to Bethlehem Hospital and observe poor creatures perfectly free of pain in body whose minds are wrung with bitter anguish—and you will soon see that none can bear a wounded spirit. Oh, listen to the Lord, for it is a fearful thing to fall into His hands. If there is no material fire, if there is no literal worm, this will be sorry consolation for a soul on flame with woe.

Though I am thus speaking, I know what some will do. You will go away and say, "I could not bear to hear him." I do not ask you to hear me, but I pray you do not neglect your *souls*. You will say, "What a harsh preacher!" Say so, but do not be harsh with your own souls. You will say, "He brings up the old bugbear." If it is an old bugbear, you are men and need not worry about it—but if it is not so, would I not be a demon if I did not warn you? As long as God spares my life, I hope I shall not be found unfaithful to your souls. So long as I believe this Book, I cannot but warn you that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

III. In the third place, and briefly, I should like you to CONSIDER HOW THIS TEXT IS PUT.

The punishment to be endured is here described as falling into the hands of the living God. Will not that be fearful? You hear men speak of falling into the hands of the devil—that, no doubt, would be something terrible—but this is much worse, falling into the hands of the living God. But what could there be that would terrify and alarm the soul in falling into the hands of the living God? Let me remind you. You sinners, when you begin to think of God, feel uneasy. In a future state you will be compelled to think of God. God is not in all your thoughts now—it is the only place where He is not; but when you enter the future state, you will not be able to escape from the thought of God; you will then realize the words of David, "If I make my bed in Hell, You are there also." That thought will torment you. You will have to think of God as One to whom you were ungrateful. You will look up, and think, "There is the God who made me, who fed me, clothed me, and if He chastened me, did it for my good, and I never thanked Him, but I used His name by way of blasphemy." You will feel remorse, but not repentance, as you recollect that He did honestly invite you to come to Him, that He did call and you refused, that He stretched out His hands and you paid no attention to Him. As you think of the happiness of those whose hearts were given to Him, it will make your miseries great to think of what you have lost. You will hate Him, and here, it seems to me, will be your misery. The hatred of the soul to everything that is good will involve fearful misery, and more so if that soul sees that good is Infinite, that good is victorious, that goodness reigns in Heaven!

Well may the wicked gnash their teeth, as they note the overthrow of evil and the establishment of good! Ungodly men, both here and hereafter, hate God because He is good; just as of old, the wicked hated the saints because they were saints; and they hate Him all the more because He is so powerful that they cannot defeat Him or frustrate His designs. Ah, those sins of yours will feed the flame within your conscience, and will be an undying worm within your heart. Oh, Friends, it is misery on earth to hate God; it is misery to live with those who hate God; but when sin shall become fully developed, there will be no need of racks and flames—sin itself will be enough to make its own punishment; no punishment more acute and more terrible, while the Presence of God all the while shall act as a great exciting cause to stir up the bad passions, and the vile enmity, and the horrid rebellion of lost, fallen spirits. Oh turn to Him, for to turn FROM Him is to be unhappy! To love God is Heaven, to hate Him brings Hell. You are so made that you cannot

sin and be happy. It was right of God to make you such a creature that holiness and happiness should go together—it was right of Him to make you such a creature that sin and sorrow must go together, and if you will have sin, you must have sorrow. Oh turn from it while you may! Oh may God's Spirit turn you now before you enter into that world where there is no turning, but where the die is cast, and the road is chosen. As the arrow once shot speeds onward in its course, and turns not from it, so must you speed on in holiness and happiness or in sin and sorrow, for there is no turning from the course.

IV. I desire to close by saying, if THESE THINGS ARE SO, THEN ACT ACCORDINGLY. *Sinner*, unless you are prepared to say this text is a lie, do not fall into the hands of the living God. But you say, "How can I escape, then?" By falling into the hands of the living God *now*, in another sense. If you will come and confess your sin, if you will trust in Him whom God has set forth as a Propitiation for sin, there is pardon for you; there is pardon for you *now!* However great your sins may have been, if with a broken heart you will say, "I will arise and go unto my Father," there is room in His heart, there is room at the table of His Divine Grace, there is room in Heaven for you. Whoever among you turns unto the living God shall certainly live. "Only confess your iniquity," He said, "only return unto Me, and I will have mercy upon you"—

"You sinners, seek His Grace, whose wrath you cannot bear:
Fly to the shelter of His Cross, and find salvation there."

To trust Christ is the true way of escape! Rely upon Him and you shall live.

To the saint—what should be the effect of this Doctrine? I will show you from the lips of one who hates it. I read in a newspaper yesterday the notes of a sermon preached by a certain Congregational preacher in London, a sermon which I must confess did not altogether so much startle me as it would have done if I had not known the gentleman's past. But it did startle me when I read these words. I will quote a few sentences: "If I dwelt upon this doctrine Sunday after Sunday in this place of worship, and induced you to believe that people who have lived and died impenitent are thrown into a state of condemnation and misery—I say, if I believed that, how could I fail to feel for you or find rest to my spirit until I grasped every one of you and beseeched you to consider how terrible is your destiny, and how awful your danger? Are we not giving up ourselves to all sorts of pleasures and entertainments? When the work of the day is over, do we not try to obtain some sort of relaxation among the drama, the theater, the cards, and all kinds of social delights to direct our thoughts from the terrible, piercing realities which are every day and every hour wearing out our lives? How dare you if spirits of men are going into everlasting damnation every instant that you breathe, if you believe that with every breath you draw there is some soul damned forever, some poor human being which has lost its way and come into utter misery? Are you to be playing games, are you to be going to concerts and sitting in front of stages and theatrical entertainments and finding your pleasures and recreations there? If you do, you are like demons; if you can look on and see unnumbered millions of your fellow creatures perishing forever, and if you can live and enjoy yourselves, you deserve to perish forever."

And then he goes on to say that if we can go to comfortable places of worship and sit there contentedly, and spend our lives in making money and live for nothing else, then we are false to our profession of belief in this doctrine, and he denounces the inconsistency, and adds, "If I believe that doctrine I dare not preach here; I do not know where I dare preach, but somewhere under the open sky where I should be able to say that human beings are being lost. If this doctrine of everlasting damnation is true, how ought you to labor to save souls from everlasting death! You ought never to think of anything else, but declare it from the housetops, and never enjoy yourselves or make more money or sit quietly in Chapel, you ought to wander over all the earth and bring spirits back again to the God who will damn them if they do not come unto Him."

Now when I read all this, I thought, "It is even so. The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment should thus act upon us, and for this very reason it ought to be preached and insisted upon—one would not have been surprised to hear the preacher proceed to press the Doctrine in order to produce just such hatred of frivolity and worldliness, and just such zeal and fervor, but who is not horrified to find that the next sentence is—"I really believe that the Doctrine of Everlasting Damnation is a blasphemy against God! I believe it to be demoralizing to the spirit of man, and subversive of all the laws of humanity! I believe that the doctrine of Atheism would be better." After first of all showing how we ought to live if that Doctrine is true, and very properly showing its influence in promoting zeal and fervor, this misguided man declares that Atheism would be better than a Doctrine so practically useful. No answer is needed beyond his own words. Surely that Doctrine is not so very demoralizing which would make ministers and hearers earnest to win souls, keep them from vain amusements, and make them give up mere money-making, and pleasure-seeking, and self-comfort—and drive them into earnest, passionate weeping, longing and labor for men that they might be saved!

I pray God that such teachers may have a better mind, and that all of us may be kept faithful by the Power of the Holy Spirit, working to win men because "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

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"Your gentleness has made me great."
Psalm 18:35.

THERE are several interpretations of this text. A moment will suffice to give them to you. The word is capable of being translated, "Your *goodness* has made me great." David saw much of benevolence in God's action towards him, and he gratefully ascribed all his greatness not to his own goodness, but to the goodness of God. "Your *Providence*" is another reading which is indeed nothing more than goodness in action. Goodness is Providence in embryo; Providence is goodness fully developed. Goodness is the bud of which Providence is the flower; or goodness is the seed of which Providence is the harvest. Some render it, "Your *help*," which is but another word for Providence. Providence is the firm ally of the saints, aiding them in the service of their Lord. Some learned annotators tell us that the text means, "Your *humility* has made me great." "Your *condescension*" may, perhaps, serve as a comprehensive reading, combining the ideas which we have already mentioned, as well as that of humility. It is God's making Himself little, which is the cause of our being made great. We are so little that if God should manifest His greatness without condescension, we should be trampled under His feet; but God, who must stoop to view the skies and bow to see what angels do, bends His eyes yet lower and looks to the lowly and contrite, and makes them great. While these are the translations which have been given to the adopted text of the original, we find that there are other readings; for instance, the Septuagint, which reads, "Your discipline"—Your fatherly correction—"has made me great," while the Chaldee paraphrase reads, "Your Word has increased me." Still the idea is the same. David ascribes all his own greatness to the condescending goodness and graciousness of his Father in Heaven. I trust we all feel that this sentiment is echoed in our hearts, and we also confess that whatever of goodness or greatness God may have put upon us, we must cast our crowns at His feet, and cry, "Your gentleness has made me great."

We intend, this morning, to keep to the authorized version: "Your gentleness has made me great." And, in handling the text we shall have three points; first, the text *suggests historical illustrations* from the life of David; secondly, it *awakens personal gratitude;* and thirdly, it *declares gracious privilege*—we are made great.

I. The life of David is exceedingly full of illustrations of the Truth of God which he here uttered—"Your gentleness has made me great." We will briefly review it up to the time of his becoming king. David, as the youngest of the family, contrary to the general rule, appears to have been despised by his parents so that when Samuel came to keep the feast, they sent for all their sons except David who was left in the fields keeping the sheep. I should suppose, judging from the conduct of his brothers to him in the valley of Elah, that they held him in very small esteem.

Probably their habits were very different from his; they could not enter into the holier ways of the shepherd songster, nor could he enjoy their ruder and less seemly exercises. He was the despised one of the family, a reproach unto his mother's children; nevertheless the Lord had chosen him in preference to all the rest, for the Gentleness of God delighted in David the shepherd boy. What a balm must that Divine Love have been to David's wounded spirit! How often, sitting alone with his flocks, must he have sang to his harp, "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up"! The gracious Gentleness of his God to him must have encouraged his broken spirit when he felt the roughness of his father and the scorn of his brothers. His early life was peculiarly a season of hallowed rest and consecrated enjoyment of the Gentleness of the Lord.

His first entrance upon public life was greatly marked by the sternness of those who should have discerned his worth and treated him with love. His father sent him to the army, not as a soldier, though never was there a more valiant man than this youngest son of Jesse, but he was employed as a mere burden-bearer. "Take now for your brothers an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to your brothers; and carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand." He was a mere porter and messenger to his more honored brothers. When he began to inquire concerning the giant—"Who is this that defies the armies of the Living God?" his brothers asked in a most snarling and contemptuous way, "With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? Because of the pride and naughtiness of your heart to see the battle have you come." Very different was the gentle communing of his heavenly Father. When in the inner chamber of his spirit his heart talked with God, he received no contemptuous epithets from the Most High. It is true he had all the outward marks of youth, and consequent unfitness for the fight; but the Lord sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart, and that bold heart was chosen to meet the Philistine. David was a man after God's own heart, and God's gentle communing with him strengthened him and made him so great that he dared to say, "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." The harshness of his brothers might have cowed him, but the Gentleness of God encouraged him. He might have quailed before their

irony and sarcasm, but the tender promise of God was the still water of which he drank and the green pasture in which he rested.

Now David comes to court, but he is no sooner among the courtiers than Saul hates him. "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands" was a song most unmusical to Saul's jealous ears. "Saul eyed David," and in later days, when David played upon the harp, the evil spirit came upon Saul, and he hurled his javelin at the young harpist, hoping to pin him to the wall. But mark the Gentleness of God—while Saul hated him the people loved him—for all Judah and all Israel loved David because he went in and out before them, and better still, the God who tried him with Saul comforted him with Jonathan. I like to think of those generous consolations which Jonathan rendered to the man whom his father so grievously maltreated. Those quiet evening walks, those tender interchanges of affection when the love of Jonathan, which surpassed the love of woman, made glad the tender heart of David, must have helped to make David greatly glad. He must have felt at times as if he would leave Saul's court, and fly from the service of his country; but then Jonathan was the tie to keep him in his proper place, the gentle silken bond which bound him to the horns of God's Altar. It was God's Gentleness in raising up Jonathan as his companion which kept David in the place where greatness was possible for him, and enabled him to still live in those courts of which he was soon himself to be the master. There was gentleness even about the character of his wife Michal. The father would destroy, but the daughter saves her husband's life.

When David at last fled from Saul he fled to Nob, to the priests. I think that was great Gentleness on the part of God which permitted David to take the show bread and the consecrated sword. I never hear David rebuked for that bold deed; our Savior mentions it without a single word of censure; according to the strict letter of the Law it appears to be perfectly unjustifiable—but the Gentleness of God saw the need of His servant, and inclined the heart of all the priests towards David, so that they gave him bread, and gave him what was equally necessary under his difficulty—the sword of Goliath. When David fled into the wilderness, we cannot read the story of him among the caves of Adullam and the goat tracks of Engedi with any feelings of pity, for his joys ran high in his banishment. I can understand him sighing for the House of God, and declaring that he "dwelt in a dry and thirsty land where no water was," but, on the other hand, one might almost envy David there in his solitary fastnesses, for his God was his Companion, and the blessings of the Most High were showered upon him. There was Gentleness towards him even in those wild places, so that the gypsy life of David was rendered very happy; and the wanderer banished from his native land was not banished from his God, but felt the Presence of the Most High in the midst of his solitude. "Your gentleness has made me great."

There are two points in David's history where I think the Gentleness of God eminently worked with him. One particularly is connected with

Nabal. That churl sent a very insulting message to David—"There are many servants, nowadays, who break away from their masters." I must not say that David was a Welshman, but he possessed much of the hot blood of our Brothers, and was warm in temperament. David had a hot heart within him, quick for love and quick for anger too, and in an instant his soul was on fire with resentment—"God do so to me, and more also," he said, "if I leave anything of him before the morning light." Away he goes with his band to slay Nabal. Now, what is to prevent him? Nabal cannot resist him; but here comes a wise and amiable woman—no one more susceptible to kindly female influence than David—here comes the wise Abigail with her laden asses, bearing presents. How wisely she puts it; how her lovely face, and streaming eyes, and bended knees, all aid her while she adds—"This shall be no grief unto you, nor offense of heart unto my lord, either that you have shed blood causeless, or that my lord has avenged himself." It was a blessed interposition of Divine Grace which sent Abigail just then! David would certainly have taken terrible vengeance, and have stained his character with vindictive blood-shedding if it had not been for the Gentleness of God which found so good a wife in so bad a house, and prompted her to interpose.

Take another case. It must have been gentle influence from on high which kept David back, when as he walked at night over the field where Saul and his host all slept, he penetrated within the trenches and through the armed men, and came to the place where the king lay with his men at arms all round him, every man asleep. There was the water at the king's head, and his spear stuck in the ground; and Abishai, one of those fierce-minded sons of Zeruiah who are always ready for a blow, said to David, "Let me smite him; I will smite him but this once," but David holds up his hand, and declares that he will not be guilty of the blood of the Lord's Anointed. There must have been a marvelously gentle influence over David just then to have kept back his hand! I will not say that nine out of ten warriors would have done it, and have been justified in so doing, according to martial law, but I will say that there is scarcely a case to be found in history where a man would have spared his cruel, inveterate, and malicious foe—engaged in open and relentless warfare with him—when such an opportunity had been put into his hands. David had never been so great if Divine Gentleness had not restrained the blow!

Running on in the history of David we find that he was not always wise. How like a fool he looked when he scrabbled on the wall and spat upon his beard, and played the madman before the king of the Philistines! Ah, David, what a miserable spectacle! Though fit to be a companion of angels, he acted as if he had been only fit to herd with lunatics; but God delivered him, and after he had been delivered, you remember he wrote that beautiful Psalm in which he says, "Come, you children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord," and so on—a most beautiful expression of gratitude to God, and an earnest desire to teach others in God's way. Even when His people play the fool,

God does not cast them away. When we are such that God Himself might be ashamed of us and say, "Take him away! Have I need of a madman to play the fool before Me?" yet even then our God, who knows that we are but dust, has pity upon us and delivers us out of the mischief into which our folly has thrust us. Possibly in David's life there is not one moment in which his anguish was more acute than when he returned to Ziklag. He had been marching with Achish to invade his own native land. He was in a very awkward position, he could not fight against his own countrymen, and yet having taken refuge with the Philistines he was bound to go with them to war; in that dilemma the Lord interposed for him; the Philistines' chieftains became jealous and distrustful of him, and through their influence the king of the Philistines dismissed him.

However, when he went back to Ziklag, the place where he and his men had dwelt, he found it burned to the ground, the wives of his comrades and all their goods had been carried away; not a vestige left of their happy home, children and family all gone; it is said that the men of war "lifted up their voice and wept." It takes a great deal to make a soldier sit down and weep; but in their anguish they went further and spoke of stoning David. What did David do? He "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." He turned himself to the Kindness and Gentleness of the Most High, and took comfort in his God. Surely the Gentleness of God must then have shone out in contrast with the bitterness and ferocity of the men with whom he was associated. What could David do? It was not his fault that Ziklag had been burned. How could he prevent the robbers from plundering? He turned to his God when he was thus falsely accused, and comfort flowed in like a mighty stream; and not many hours afterwards he overtook the spoilers and came back joyfully victorious.

I think I have proven my point and need not delay you longer, that wherever any roughness from man had to he borne by David, there was always some gentleness on the part of God shown at the same time to sustain his spirit. When it seemed as if he must be quite crushed and overcome, and all hands were against him and none to help him, then it was that a consolation gently given by the right hand of the Most High made David to play the man again, so that he triumphed over all his adversaries. Thus much for historical illustration.

II. Now, we will turn to your own history, for the text EXCITES PERSONAL GRATITUDE.

Have you that little book with you? I suppose you do not all keep one, but still your memory will serve you as a diary—do not print it, we have too many autobiographies already; but if you do not print it for other people, keep it for yourselves. May I ask you to turn to an early page in it? Do you remember *when your heart was broken with a sense of sin?* A truly broken heart is anguish, indeed; when your righteousness becomes filthy rags, and your hope changes into despair; the anger of God pursues you; is before you, you could see no way of escape? I shall not

go over the dark details, but you remember well when you were in that condition. Do you also recollect the Gentleness of the Savior? That was a very tender promise which first came to you like oil poured into your wounds. That was a very tender hand, a very cheering influence of the Holy Spirit which lulled the tempest into a calm, and hushed the thunder into the whisper of Love. Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where Jesus first met with you? Some of us can never forget the rapture all Divine when He showed us His hands and His feet, and said to us, "I have suffered all this for you; weep no more, your sins were laid on Me." There was peculiar Gentleness about that first action of God the Holy Spirit. He has never, perhaps, seemed quite so gentle with us since, for we have never been as weak as we were then. We were shorn lambs, and He tempered the wind to us. Our wounds were very raw and bleeding, and He touched us very softly, knowing that he who would heal a sick soul must have downy fingers with which to touch it. Gentleness indeed was on His part which said to us, "Live!" when He saw us wallowing in our blood.

Since then, dear Friends, what tokens of gentleness you and I have had! How many times He has *checked our imprudence!* When we first began our spiritual life, we meant to drive the Church before us, and to drag the world behind us—our own idea was that there never would be such an earnest Christian as we would be. We looked with pity upon the coldness of many professors, and we resolved in our own souls that we would far outdo them all. And what excitements we got into, and what things we said, and what strange things we did! There was much to be envied about our first spiritual life, but there was much to be pitied in it too. Oh, what fools we were, and we thought ourselves so wise. What blockheads we made of ourselves every now and then, and all the while wondered that everybody else did not do the same. But by what gentle means the Lord curbed us! He did not do as some of our friends did, who put enough wet blankets on us to extinguish our zeal; He let the zeal burn, but He gently checked the imprudence of it. We did not know how weak we were; He let us fall and cut our knees, and learn by experience our utter inability to go it alone. When a schoolmaster has a very dull boy, he would gladly teach him some useful knowledge, but after 20 times teaching he does not know it; and the master says, "What shall I do with this child? How shall I ever make anything but a dunce of him?" Yet he tries again; and so our God might well have said of us. Yet, how seldom has He used the rod after all; He has been obliged to take to it sometimes, but oh, how seldom comparatively; He has dealt so gently with us, teaching us with much pain and care. When a man has taken to gardening who does not understand it, if he takes his knife in the pruning season, at what a rate he goes to work! His cutting here and there will do 10 times more harm than good, but the gardener who is well skilled is gentle with the knife; and truly, dear Friends, our great Husbandman has been very gentle with the knife with all His trees. Some

of you have lost a husband or a child, and you have come from wealth to poverty. Yes, He has used the knife, or else He were not wise; but He has still spared you some comforts, or else He were not kind. At any rate He has spared you Himself, and He is more than all to your languishing spirit. Thus in the way in which He has dealt with your imprudence, and sins, the Lord has had a world of gentleness with you.

In looking over our diary, we may say that God has dealt very gently with us in *accepting our first endeavors.* When you began to preach, my dear Friend, the first time, if the Lord had really let you know what a mess you made of it, you would never have tried again; and the first time you were asked to pray in public, if you could have heard the opinion of some of those who heard you, you would not have felt very happy; but very happily for you, you never did hear those opinions, and you have been able to keep on till now you pray with much acceptance and profit to your Christian Brothers and Sisters. Our beginnings are very much like our children's beginning. Many a young apprentice spoils a great deal more than he earns, and yet his master knows that he cannot learn without spoiling something, and so he bears with him. And our God has let us spoil a great deal of work that we may one day be skilled workers. Through Jesus He accepts our prayers and our efforts; and though we are very blundering servants, He has not discharged us, but He still keeps us in His service, and blesses us in it, and in His mercy He gives us to see the work of His hands prospering.

That same Divine Gentleness also displays itself in caring for us in our sorrowful circumstances, and particularly in our inward fears. There are distresses to which God's people are subject with which their fellow Christians can have but little sympathy. There are some Christians whom I have tried at times to comfort, but their fears have been so silly that I have felt more inclined to laugh at them than to console them. There are many of God's saints who are the victims of foolish fears, but the fears are none the less painful and vexatious because of their folly. Now our God is so Tender and Gentle that He even condescends to deal with our silly fears. Take such a one as this—"I will never leave you, I will never forsake you." Now it really is foolish of us to think that God will leave us or forsake us, and yet He condescends to meet that foolish and even wicked unbelief of ours, and gives a promise to meet it! To suppose that He can forget is the height of absurdity, and yet He is pleased to meet that absurd fear of ours by saying, "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" Even the absurdity of our sorrow does not move the anger of God, but in His great Gentleness He enters into the childish troubles of His children, lets them tell out their troubles and sorrows, and "as a father pities," not a man of his own size, but "his *children*, so the Lord pities them who fear Him." You have seen a father bring himself down to his child. Two or three children have been at play; some of them have been cross and unkind to the little one, a child of three or four years of age, and father talks as if he were a child of three years of age

himself; and though the trouble when it is stated is so very little, such a very insignificant trouble that a man would be ashamed to mention it, yet father enters into it altogether. That is what the Psalmist means—"Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them who fear Him." His Gentleness shows itself in His being afflicted in our afflictions and entering into our sorrows, and putting Himself side by side with us in the battle of spiritual life. I trust I may not weary you while I remind you of all this. I shall not if all the while you continue blessing and praising God for what you have tasted and handled of these good things.

How much patience and gentleness God has had with us *in suiting His truths to our understandings and experiences!* "I have many things to say unto you," says Jesus, "but you cannot bear them now." It is so with us—I suppose we did not learn the Doctrine of Election during the first week of our spiritual life. Higher and more sublime Truths of God are left for later experience, and belong rather to advanced saints than to the babes in Grace. If the babe in Christ knew so much about the filthiness of his own heart as the advanced man of God, he might not be able to bear up under the grief occasioned by such knowledge. Inward discoveries come by degrees, and as we see the light of the Cross we see the darkness of sin; as we are assured of our salvation in Christ, we discover our utter and entire ruin by the Fall of Adam. It is His Gentleness which makes the All-Wise One stoop down to our ignorance and teach us by slow degrees.

What Gentleness our God has shown to us in the timing and the tuning of our trials! We are such poor weaklings at times, that if we were tempted much we would not be able to bear it. The timing of heavy trial is of very great importance. If I had lost my friend a year ago what would I have done? But just now it is a great sorrow, yet it has its alleviation. Had I been tempted as I now am but last week, I would have yielded; but now I have received strength from on high, and I can pass with safety through the fire. Have you not often felt that either when you have had an opportunity to sin you have not felt the temptation, or else when you have been tempted you have not found the opportunity? When you have been weak you have not experienced the trial, or when you have borne the trial you have not been weak.

I will not say more, except I beg your hearts to praise God. I pray you wake up your souls to bless Him. How much we lose by not blessing God more! Oh that I could praise Him! If I might choose my vocation on earth, I think I would choose above all things to write hymns and psalms, such as the Lord's people might sing when they praise Him; and my highest wish would be to be one of Heaven's poets, to write psalms for the spirits before the Throne, and compose celestial sonnets for the blood-bought ones who praise Him day and night. Oh to praise the Lord! Oh to bless Him, and to magnify Him—to spend and to be spent in the praise and glory of my God! Wake up, you slumbering ones! Arouse yourselves, you who are dull and dead of heart! Wake up, my glory, awake psaltery and

harp! I myself will awake right early while I remember that His Loving Kindness has made me great.

III. Our third duty is to DECLARE OUR GRACIOUS PRIVILEGE. "Great," says one, "why, the text applies to David, it does not apply to us." Ah, but we have a body of great people here this morning. I do not suppose you will see their names in the *Times* tomorrow, but for all that we are honored with great company this morning. I will be bold enough to say that I question whether the House of Commons, and the House of Lords, and Windsor Castle thrown in together, hold more great folks than this Tabernacle does this morning. Great people! Yes, *really great* people! The true aristocracy! Let us describe them. There *is a greatness of birth* which God gives to His children. "It is no mean thing," said David, "to be a king's son-in-law," but to be a king's son, to have the blue blood in your veins; you do not think much of it because you have not got it, but you suppose those who have it think it the most wonderful of all privileges? To be descended from that thievish crew who came over to England at the Norman Conquest is thought to be a high honor; but how much more is it to be descended from the King of kings! The blood imperial of Heaven is in the veins of every regenerated man and woman. No matter though your garb is coarse, and your home is the abode of poverty, you are a prince of the blood royal the moment that you are born-again and made a child of God, and adopted into the family of the Most High. These are the princes of the Living God; these are they who shall be crowned with immortal honor in the day of the Lord's appearing. Though here they may live unknown and despised, yet angelic eyes detect them, and the whole world shall see them. "When He shall appear they shall appear with Him in glory."

Men court much the greatness which comes by *election*. There are presidents of republics who become great by the national vote; it is no mean greatness to be dignified with imperial rank, not by the accident of birth, but by the well-earned respect of honest men. This is something that men may covet. Well, we have this very greatness put upon us by the Election of God. Everyone who believes in Christ Jesus was chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world. What are the votes of men, what the applause of the many after all? The choice of God is to be desired most, because He has set His Love upon me my soul shall sing and rejoice. Election makes all the objects of it great. Now, as you think of your birth and your Election in Christ Jesus, you can say, "Your gentleness has made me great." There is a kind of greatness in the world to which most people pay quite enough respect, namely, the greatness of *wealth*. A man is very much thought of in proportion to the contents of his iron safe. After all, people do not respect men so much nowadays as they do iron safes. The iron safe is the god of thousands. However, saints can stand on an equality with any men—City men, or whatever they may be. Every Believer in Jesus Christ can sing—

"This world is mine and worlds to come,

Earth is my lodge and Heaven my home;
All things are ours, the gifts of God,
The purchase of a Savior's blood."

Poor rich men have to take care of these things for us, but they belong to us. The sons of the alien are our plowmen and our vinedressers; they are serfs of God's Providence, slaves in the Kingdom in which we are sons. He who on bended knee can lift his streaming eye to Heaven and say, "My Father!" is rich to all the intents of bliss, rich enough for earth; and when all the treasures of earth shall be melted, when the rust shall have corrupted, and the thief shall have broken through, and the moth shall have eaten up all the world's treasures—then shall the wealth of the truly great shine forth forever more.

Some men are great on account of their *victories*. How they crowd the streets when a Caesar or a Napoleon returns in triumph from the slaughter of his fellow creatures! Lo, I triumphed! Sound the trumpets! Beat the drums! Hang out the garlands! Gather, you crowds! Here comes the red-handed man, crimson with the blood of his fellows! What glory is this? Bah! It smells of the butcher's shambles. The glory of a child of God is the Glory which Christ has given him of having slain his sins, of having trampled under foot his corruptions, the glory of having fought with devils and overcome them, having wrestled with principalities and powers, and laid them in the dust. This is true glory! And what glory shall that be which awaits every true Believer when up the everlasting hills he shall ascend to be welcomed where his Master sits, welcomed with the same words of congratulation, "Well done!"

There are great men, too, about the world, who are great in *influence*. All the world is governed by the backstairs. There are persons who sit behind the throne and pull the strings. People always touch their hats to men of influence. They may want a situation in the Customs for their first son; they may require to get an introduction into the Admiralty for the third boy. But what shall I say of every Believer? Beloved, his influence is unbounded. I wish you would use your influence for me. When you are speaking with the King of kings, since He has promised you that whatever you shall ask He will give it to you, speak for me! I think I have some claim on some of you. When it is well with you, think of me. When you are in the King's courts, you who are the King's and have an audience with Him, who sit at His table and lean your heads upon His bosom, pray for His poor servant who has many cares, and many labors, and longs to see the King's face always. Beloved, the influence which the saints have with the King of kings is marvelous. They can touch the sinews of the Omnipotent arm, and it will do for them whatever their hearts desire. If you did but know it, the poorest saint, though bedridden, is more to be honored for the influence which she may have with the King of kings, than the greatest peers of the realm for the influence which they may have in the courts of royalty.

But I must not tarry, else I was about to say that we have a greatness of history. There are some men who have a peculiar greatness on

account of their history. Everyone wants to see them. If they go into a crowd everyone whispers, "That is he." What do you say of a child of God? There is more to be seen in him than in any other person. Shall I tell you his history? What would you think of a man who has been dead and buried, and is alive again, and is the same man and yet not the same? Himself, but yet a new man in Christ Jesus? A man who has been born twice? Such is every Believer. He has been begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He is dead with Christ and is risen with Him; and even now he does not live upon earth, but is made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Why, he is the greatest curiosity in the world. A Christian is a wonder to angels, a wonder to devils, a wonder to himself; and if men were wise he would be a wonder to them.

Great men, again, there are because of their *great discoveries.* We admire the men who penetrated into the center of Africa and found out the source of the ancient river. Believers also have made discoveries in the vast desert of their own nature, and have found out the source of the Eternal Love of God. They can sing with Kent—

"A monument of Grace,
A sinner saved by blood;
The streams of love I trace,
Up to their fountain, God;
And in His mighty breast I see,
Eternal thoughts of love to me."

It is better than finding out the source of 50 Niles, to find my name inscribed upon the heart of God, and to find myself chosen and dear to God. Truly then, though we are little and despised, we can say without any exaggeration, "Your gentleness has made me great."

Two things and I have done. The first is to Christian people. As you go your way, you who have believed, do not go out of this place with your heads hanging down, and do not behave like dispirited people. You are great, I want you to live like great folks. Live up to your spiritual incomes, you will spend a great deal if you do. Live happily, live joyfully, live holily, live triumphantly; live as those who are to live in Heaven. Do not live like the pauper sons of earth, who with their gold and their silver are yet naked, and poor, and miserable; but live like the sons of God who are clothed in the scarlet and fine linen of the Righteousness of Christ, and fare sumptuously every day. The next time you are met by some would-be great man who wants to domineer over your faith, look him respectfully but firmly in the face, and tell him that consciences and hearts were made for God alone. The next time the world attempts to win you by its bribes, tell the world it does not know what you are worth, or else it would not attempt to bribe you. Every man has his price, but your price is too great for the world to give. Tell the world that you can look it in the face, and are not afraid to dare it to do its worst or its best, for you are one of the blood royal of Heaven.

I hate, above all things, Christians getting into the way of being honest with themselves. Mind you, the Puritans were not proud, they were humble men, but at the same time they knew that a man of God has something in him, and they would not lay their necks beneath the feet of tyrants. When kings began to devour the saints, they quoted the old Psalm about "binding kings in chains, and nobles in fetters of iron," and soon the Ironsides were to the front in the day of war for the Lord, and for the faith, and for the Covenant. We need no carnal weapons now. We have learned better than they. We care little about politics. Let the potsherds of the earth strive with themselves about that; but when it comes to truth and righteousness, for God and for His cause, shall we put our finger on our lips and speak with bated breath? Never, as the Lord our God is our helper! Brothers and Sisters, get a little touch of the old Lutheran spirit; it is needed nowadays. This England of ours is going to the Pope as fast as it can, and all sorts of heresies are springing up, and the most of men are soft animals, without the appearance of a backbone in them. I pray that you Christian people may get a thoroughly sound backbone of high spiritual principle, and may feel that you cannot give up the smallest atom of the Truth of God, but must stand fast for it and by it, come what may. These are the men the edge of whose sword the fiend has felt of old, and he still trembles at the thought of them.

This advice of mine would be very dangerous if I did not couple it with the whole of the text. Remember where all true moral greatness must come from—it must come from God alone, and from His Gentleness. Who are you to use these big words? Nothing, a swollen mass of emptiness, except as God's Love dwells with you. But oh, Brothers and Sisters, the Tenderness of God, while it makes us lie in the very dust before Him, yet lifts us up in the presence of our fellows. The Love and Gentleness of God makes us feel that we are less than nothing, less than the least of all His mercies; but oh, it makes us feel that we cannot sin, that we cannot yield to our fellow men in matters of conscience, that we must stand up for Him who has done so much for us. May you realize in your lives and in your hearts the meaning of my text, "Your gentleness has made me great!"

Portion of Scripture read before the sermon—Psalm 18.

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HOPE, YET NO HOPE—NO HOPE, YET HOPE
NO. 684

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 8, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"You are wearied in the greatness of your way; yet you did not say, There is no hope."
Isaiah 57:10.

"And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will everyone do the imagination of his evil heart."
Jeremiah 18:12.

WHO can understand the subtlety of the human heart? Well said the Prophet, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." The physician of the body had need be skillful to track disease to its secret origin, and to follow it through all its mysterious pathways in the mazes of the human body; but he who has to deal with *souls* has a task far harder, inasmuch as sin is more subtle than the virus of the most incurable disease, and the way in which it intertwines itself with every power of humanity is even more marvelous than the strange influences of plague and pest upon the human body. Those whose business and office it is to deal with sick souls, set it as their great objective to be instruments in the hands of God of bringing diseased souls to trust in the great salvation which God has provided in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ; and simple as such a work may seem to be, every truly experienced minister is brought to confess that it needs a Divine Art and Omnipotent Power to bring a soul to rest simply upon Christ. All the subtlety of the human heart exerts itself to prevent that heart from trusting in the Savior, and while evil is always cunning, it shows itself to be supremely so in its efforts to guard the Cross against the approaches of sinners. By the Cross, as the Savior said, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed—the Cross develops the subtlety of man when we see his struggles and contortions to avoid resting upon its glorious provisions of Divine Grace.

There are two phases in spiritual life which well illustrate the deceitfulness of the heart. The first is that described in my first text, in which the man, though wearied in his many attempts, is not and cannot be convinced of the hopelessness of self-salvation; but still clings to the delusion that he shall be able, somehow, he knows not how, to deliver himself from ruin. When you shall have hunted the man out of this, you will then meet with a new difficulty, which is described in the second text. Finding there is no hope in himself, the man draws the unwarrantable conclusion that there is no hope for him in God; and, as once you had to battle with his self-confidence, now you have to wrestle with his despair. It is self-righteousness in both cases. In the one case it is the soul con-

tent with self-righteousness, in the second place it is man sullenly preferring to perish rather than receive the Righteousness of Christ. I ask the children of God to pray that I may be enabled to simply but earnestly deal with men's souls this morning. It is their conversion that I am aiming at. I shall neither strive to please your ears nor your tastes, nor do I court an opportunity for oratorical display; all I want is to lead the sinner, by God's Grace, out of himself, and then afterwards to lead him up from his self-despair; and oh, may God the Holy Spirit bring some souls by my means this morning to the foot of the Cross, and may they look up and know themselves to be saved through the finished Sacrifice of our Great High Priest!

I. Considering the first text, we have to speak of A HOPE WHICH IS NO HOPE. *"You are wearied in the length of your way; yet you did not say, There is no hope; you have found the life of your hand; therefore you were not grieved."* This well pictures the pursuit of men after satisfaction in earthly things. They will hunt the frequents of wealth, they will travel the pathways of fame, they will dig into the mines of knowledge, they will exhaust themselves in the deceitful delights of sin, and, finding them all to be vanity and emptiness, they will become sorely perplexed and disappointed; but they will still continue their fruitless search. Wearied with the length of their way, they still stagger forward under the influence of spiritual madness, and though there is no result to be reached except that of everlasting disappointment, yet they press forward with as much ardor as if a full assurance of success sustained their spirits. Worldlings seem far more resolved to die than some Christians are to live; they are more desperate in seeking their own destruction than Believers are in enjoying spiritual life. Indeed, they are content because they have found the life of their hand. Living from hand to mouth is enough for them; that they are still alive, that they possess present comforts and present enjoyments, this contents the many. As for the future, they say, "Let it take care of itself." As for eternity, they leave others to care for its realities; the life of their hand is enough for them. Their motto is, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." They have no foresight for their eternal state; the present hour absorbs them. Carnal minds with all their might pursue earth's vanities, and when they are wearied in their pursuit they still say not, "There is no hope," but change the direction, and continue the idle chase. They turn to another and another of earth's broken cisterns, hoping to find water where not a drop was ever discovered before.

That, however, is not the subject of this morning. The text applies very eminently to those who are *seeking salvation by ceremonies.* This is a very numerous and increasing class. It is getting to be the current and fashionable belief that we are to be saved by going to holy places, receiving priestly baptism, Episcopal confirmation, eating consecrated bread, drinking hallowed wine, and repeating devout expressions. We are going back to the beggarly elements of Rome about as fast as we can, and in a very short time we shall see the whole of this country covered by an Anglican Popery which will be far more hard to deal with than the more

manifest Popery of Rome. It is surprising that in an age which was supposed to be one of thought and common sense, men should so soon be dazzled with the gaudy toys of Romanism. I marvel that the childish processions, the babyism, the effeminate hats, the infantile nurseryisms of Rome should have charms for reasonable men and women. Some of the churches during the past week would have made little children scream with delight; they would have felt that they were in the prettiest nurseries and toyshops which they had ever seen. O ours is an age of folly in which men think to worship God with displays fit only for children's sports.

There may be some hearer here who is pursuing salvation by outward ceremonies. Your path is certainly a very tedious one, and it will end in disappointment. If you addict yourself to the fullest ceremonies, if you are obedient to them in all their jots and tittles, keeping their fast days and their feast days, their vigils, matins and vespers, bowing down before their priesthood, their altars, and articles, giving up your reason and binding yourself in the fetters of superstition; after you have done all this, you will find an emptiness and a vexation of spirit as the only result. But it is probable that when you have once committed yourself to that course, you will go on, wearied with the road, but too bewitched to be able to leave it; pressing forward, you will be unwilling to confess that you have been mistaken; conscious that you feel but little consolation, but continue to pursue your downward course as if glory surely shone before you. It is only Divine Grace that can enable us to follow Luther's example, who, after going up and down Pilate's staircase on his knees, muttering so many Ave Marias and Paternosters, called to mind that old text, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God," and springing up from his knees forsook once and forever all dependence upon outward formalities, and quit the cloistered cell and all its austerities to live the life of a Believer, knowing that by the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified.

Yet, dear Friends, albeit that I know only Divine Grace can turn you from the delusive path of vain ceremonies, I would like to suggest a doubt or two to you which may be helpful one of these days to make you choose a wiser course. Does it not seem to you to be inconsistent with the Character of the God of Nature that He should have instituted a plan of salvation so singularly complicated and theatrical as that which is nowadays taught us by priests? Nature is simple—her grandeur lies in her simplicity. If you walk in the fields of our own happy land, or climb the lofty ranges of the Alps, you are delighted with the beautiful simplicity of Nature in which there is an utter absence of everything gaudy, showy, and theatrical. Everything has a practical design, and even the colors of the flowers, which are not without intent and design, enable the plant to drink in certain rays of light which shall best satisfy its need. There is nothing in Nature for mere display; but you step inside a place of worship dedicated to salvation by ceremonies, and I am persuaded that your taste will be outraged, if that taste has been formed upon the model of Nature. Frequently, on the Continent, I turned with loathing

from gaudily decorated churches daubed with paint, smothered with gilt, and gaudy pictures, dolls, and all sorts of baby prettiness; I turned aside from them in uttering, "If your god accepts such rubbish as this, he is no god to me; the God of yon rolling clouds and crashing thunder, yon foaming billows and towering rocks, is the God whom I adore. He is too sublime, too noble, too great-minded to take delight in your genuflections, and stage-play devotions." When I beheld processions with banners, and crosses, and smoking censers, and saw men who claimed to be sent of God, and yet dress themselves like Tom fools, I did not care for their god, but reckoned that he was some heathenish idol whom I counted it my glory as a man to scoff at and to despise! Do not fall into the notion that the God of Nature is different from the God of Grace. He who wrote the book of Nature wrote the Book of Revelation, and writes the book of experience within the human heart. Do not therefore choose a way of salvation utterly at variance with the Divine Character.

Has it never struck you that ceremonial salvation would be a very wicked way of salvation? What is there, for instance, about drops of baptismal water which could make men better? What is there about confirmation that should assure you of the forgiveness of your sins? What is there about receiving a piece of bread and drinking a drop of wine that should confer Divine Grace? Might you not remain as bad at heart, and as wicked after all as ever you were? And is it not a violation of the eternal principles of morality that a man should be endowed with Grace while his soul still clings to sin? Now, if there is no effect in water to make you hate sin, and no result from the priest's hands to make you love God, and no result from sacraments to make you holy and heavenly-minded—can you trust in them? Surely there must be some sort of congruity between the means and the result! Surely it is immoral in the highest degree to tell a man that by outward things, which cannot change the life, he shall have his sins forgiven! We shall have the iniquity of the Middle Ages back again if we have the faith of the Middle Ages proclaimed, and from all that may God in His Grace deliver us!

The followers of superstition have furnished us with a very solemn argument, for many of them when they have lain dying, have turned their eyes to other places, and have anxiously begged for full assurance of Eternal Life. Superstition, strange to say, has been truthful enough to reply, "I have no rest to offer you." For what does Rome offer when you have done all? Purgatory and its pains! It tells you that when you have done all, you may have to lie for hundreds of years in a place full of misery till you have been purged from sin! How very different from the Gospel which the Word of God reveals to you, that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is saved not only from the guilt of sin but from the love of sin—is enabled to be holy, is made a new creature, and without any purgatorial cleansing shall ascend to his Father and his God to dwell with Him forever! So simple, so God-like, so Divine; how is it that so many cast it aside, and take up with these sillinesses which are the inventions of man? This whole Book through salvation is never said to be

by anything done by priests; but salvation is everywhere spoken of as being by *Christ* through faith. There is not a place that gives a vestige of confidence to anybody who hopes to be saved by the performances of rituals—but everywhere salvation is presented to those humble, contrite souls who know and trust the Savior's blood.

Perhaps these words of mine may not apply to many of you, and therefore we will turn to another phase of the same thing. A great mass of people, even though they reject priest-craft, make *themselves* priests, and rely upon their good works. A poor and wretched man dreamed that he was counting out gold. There it stood upon the table before him in great bags, and as he untied string after string, he found himself wealthy beyond Croesus' treasures. He was lying upon a bed of straw in the midst of filth and squalor, a mass of rags and wretchedness, but he dreamed of riches. A charitable friend who had brought him help stood at the sleeper's side and said, "I have brought you help, for I know your urgent need." Now the man was in deep sleep, and the voice mingled with his dream as though it were part of it; he replied, therefore, with scornful indignation, "Get you gone! I need no miserable charity from you; I am possessor of heaps of gold. Can you not see them? I will open a bag and pour out a heap that shall glitter before your eyes." Thus foolishly he talked on, babbling of a treasure which existed only in his dreams till he who came to help him accepted his repulse and departed mournfully. When the man awakened he had no comfort from his dream, but found that he had been duped by it into rejecting his only friend. Such is the position of every person who is hoping to be saved by his good works. You have no good works except in your dreams. Those things which you supposed to be excellent are really defiled with sin and spoiled with impurity. Jesus stands by you this morning, and cries, "Soul, I have come from Heaven to redeem you. If you had any good works, there had been no need for Me to come to save you; but, inasmuch as you are naked, and poor, and miserable, I came to earth, and this face was bedewed with sweat of blood, and these hands were pierced, and this side was opened to work out your salvation. Take it; I freely present it to you." Will you, in your sleep this morning, make that sad reply, "Jesus, we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. We have neither cursed Your Father's name, nor broken your Sabbath, nor done anything amiss"? If so, dear Friends, you are resting upon a delusion, and will find it so when it is too late.

The way of salvation by works, if it were possible, would be a very wearisome way. How many good works would carry a man to Heaven would be a question very difficult to answer. It would be such a way that though a man should work his fingers to the bone, yet he would never be able to clamber up the precipice, for Sinai is too steep and high for mortal feet to force a passage to the skies up its terrible battlements. The way of salvation by works is totally contrary to that revealed in the Bible, for if there is anything plain there, this is plain, "By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified, for by the Law is the knowledge of

sin." The way of salvation by works is a proud rebellious way, by which man hopes to avoid humiliating himself before his God. Why should the Lord bestow His favor upon the man who refuses to trust in His own dear Son? Shall the Lord yield to save men, and yet let them remain proud and boastful? Shall He save a man who refuses to owe that salvation to Divine Mercy? You weary yourself, my Hearer, in your resolutions, and doings, and works, in the greatness of your way, and yet you will not confess that, "There is no hope." May the Lord force that conviction upon you till you shall turn aside from all self-confidence, and rest in Jesus Christ alone!

Many persons are looking for salvation by another form of self-deception, namely, the way of repentance and reformation. It is thought by some that if they pray a certain number of prayers, and repent up to a certain amount, they will then be saved as the result of their prayers and repenting. This, again, is another way of winning salvation which is not spoken of in Scripture. This is a way by which neither Law or Gospel receive honor. To repent is a Christian's *duty*, but to hope for salvation by virtue of that, alone, is a delusion of the most fearful kind. The reason for salvation lies not in my repenting, but in Christ's suffering; not in my renunciation of sin, but in Christ's having borne my sin in His own body on the tree. Oh, that by God's Grace I may have done with relying upon anything that comes from myself! The idea of trying to repent in order to save yourself is so ridiculous that it has sometimes reminded me of the old story of the Dutchman, who, having no family, but having a great many cousins, left his estate in this way—all the cousins were to meet in the Town Hall on a certain day, and whoever could cry for him first, and could honestly say he wept out of sorrow for his death should have the estate. Now there was a very great difficulty here, because of the remarkable mingling of feeling. Could they get themselves into a state of mind so as to lament his death? Well, the largeness of the fortune, and the desirableness of the estate at once dried up the tears. I forget how the story ends, but it sufficiently shows the impossibility of lamenting in order to gain an object. The hopeful joy and the sorrow, if both possible in themselves, would effectually neutralize each other. The tears of true repentance must be as much the gift of God as Heaven itself, and if we were to have an offer to be saved on account of our repenting, repenting would be an impossibility to us. Repentance is a part of salvation, and when Christ saves us He saves us by making us repent, but repentance does not save—salvation is the work of God, and the work of God alone. Now why do you weary yourself in this way? For surely in it "There is no hope."

My drift in all this rambling talk is just this. Whatever it is, my dear Hearer, that you are looking to as a ground of confidence—if it is anything in yourself—I pray you give up all hope, for though you have not seen it to be true, it is nevertheless assuredly so that there is no hope whatever by it. Where you have to do with the work it will be marred and spoiled, and will end in confusion. Salvation is of the Lord, and your de-

liverance from your present state of sin and guilt must come from the right hand of the Most High; it cannot in any degree, or in any measure, come from yourself. You have destroyed yourself, that is, in your works; but your help must be found in Another from the first to the last.

I shall be accused, I know, of dispiriting you; I shall desire to plead guilty to the accusation; and if it shall even be urged again that I drive you to despair, I shall again plead guilty, and glory in the result. I wish to preach everyone who would save himself into utter despair. If any man is hoping to save himself, I pray God that He may smite that hope dead on the spot, that it may be renounced forever. Sinner! Oh that you would consent to yield up all confidence in yourself, for then there would be hope for you!

Most men must have a secret hope somewhere of a false kind, for, look at the way in which they are employing themselves. Most men are not seeking to escape from the wrath to come—they are busy in worldly things while Hell is near them. They are like idiots catching flies on board a ship which is in the very act of going down. Surely those men must have some fictitious hope somewhere, or they would not act like this. We see many persons busy about their persons, decorating themselves when their soul is in ruin; like a man painting his front door when his house is in flames. Surely they must harbor some baseless hope which makes them thus insensible! We see men who do not quail and tremble, though they profess to believe the Bible which tells them that God is angry with them every day. Surely their quietness of heart must arise from some secret hope lurking in their spirits. The rope of Mercy is cast to the sinner, and he will not lay hold of it. Surely he cannot be such a fool as to love to die; he must have some hope somewhere that he can swim by his own exertions, and it is this hopefulness of the man in himself that is his ruin and his destruction. Until you are totally separate from all consciousness of hope in yourself, there is no hope that the Gospel will ever be any power to you; but when you shall throw up your hands like a drowning man, feeling, "It is all over with me! I am lost, lost, unless a stronger than I shall interpose." Oh Sinner, then there is hope for you! If we can once get you to say, "One thing I know, I cannot save myself. One thing I feel, I must have a stronger arm than mine to rescue me from ruin." When you have come to this, O Soul, we will begin to rejoice over you, and may God grant that our rejoicing may not be in vain!

II. We shall now turn to the second text. *"And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will everyone do the imagination of his evil heart."* Here we have NO HOPE—AND YET HOPE. When the sinner has at last been driven by stress of weather from the road of his own confidence, then he flies to the dreary Harbor of Despair. He is now convinced that there is no hope in himself, and like a simpleton he goes to the other extreme, and concludes, "Then I cannot be saved at all." He acts as if there were nobody in the world but himself, and begins to measure God's Power and God's Grace by his own merit and power.

Some before me, convinced of their own powerlessness, are ready to lie down in a fit of despair and die. "The preacher has been telling us there is no hope, then we will give it up." My dear Friend, I know what will be the result if you go away with that impression—you will go off to your sins, for despair is the mother of all sorts of evil. When a man says, "There is no hope of Heaven for me," then he throws the reins upon the neck of his lusts, and goes on from bad to worse. You will thoroughly misunderstand me if you go away with that impression. There is no hope for you in yourself, but there is hope for you in Him whom God has provided to be the Savior of such as you are. Hopelessness in self is what we want to bring you to, but hopelessness in itself, and especially in connection with God, would be a sin from which we would urge you to escape. If you are sitting down in despair, I want to speak to you, first, of the God of Hope. Dear Friend, there is that in God—Father, Son, and Spirit—which may remove your fears so that you need never utter a single doubting word again. You are saying, "I am full of sin." That is true; and you are much more full of sin than you think you are. "But I have been a great sinner." That is likely; and you are a greater sinner than you will ever know yourself to have been. "But I don't feel my sinnership as I ought to do." That is very likely; and you never will do so. No man on earth ever did feel sin in all its guiltiness, for God alone knows the blackness of sin.

"But I am altogether such a one that there is nothing in me to recommend me. I could almost wish I had been a great sinner, that I might feel a great repentance. I have nothing to recommend me." Now think of the Loving Kindness of God the Father. Do you remember how He revealed Himself in that parable of the prodigal son? That prodigal son had been ungrateful, wicked—very wicked; he had spent his life in all sorts of vice, and had become filthy in person and loathsome in character. His associates were of the lowest race of men, and then brutes themselves. Yet the goodness which he had not in himself his father had. He was all sin, but his father was all mercy; he was all iniquity, but his father was all loving kindness. Now can you not see, if the prodigal were here, we might say to him, "There is no hope for you in yourself. Those rags cannot recommend you; the swine trough cannot be used as an argument." But then that would not be a ground for his stopping where he is, for "there is hope for you in your father; he is so good, so tender, he rejoices to receive his returning children." And, Sinner, there is hope in God for you. His name is God, that is good. He delights in mercy—it is His soul's highest joy to clasp His Ephraim to His bosom. This very morning He has sent me to say to you, "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."

But you meet this invitation with another desponding suggestion. You say, "Why should I come before the Most High God? I have sinned, and what shall I bring as a recompense? Rivers of oil and ten thousands of the fat of fed beasts, if I could bring them, would not be acceptable to

Him. If I had a mint of merits, if I had godly impressions, if I had high moral excellence, I would come with that to God, and hope to obtain a hearing." But listen, Sinner, do you not know the name of the Second Person in the Trinity? It is Jesus Christ, the Son. Now, if you need merit, has He not enough of it? For what cause do you think He lived on earth 33 years and kept God's Law? Did He keep that for Himself? What need for God to be a Man, and to become subject to Law at all? He must have kept that Law for someone, then, but not for righteous men, for such have kept the law themselves; He must have kept it for the unrighteous.

Now, can you not take that which Christ has worked out, and take it to yourself when He freely bids you take it? You talk of sin, but have you never heard that my Lord Jesus died? Why Man, you have heard this hundreds of times; but I pray you open your eyes and see it. Do you see that Cross, the center one of the three? Thieves hang upon the other two, but God Himself hangs upon the one in the middle; God, in the form of Mary's Son, hangs bleeding out His life in acute sufferings exquisite, unutterable! For whom does He die? Not for Himself. What cause that God should be a Man and die? He suffers; He suffers for sin. For whose sin, then? Not for His own for He had none. For the sins of good people? What need of that? He dies for the sins of those who have committed sins, for the sins of transgressors such as you and I are! Oh Soul, do you not hear the Voice that said, "Look unto Me and live"? What? Jesus, am I not to do anything by way of merit? Am I not to be anything by way of preparation? Am I to stand and simply look at You and feel my sins forgiven? Blessed be Your name! What a simple plan of salvation! Now I feel my heart begin to melt. Now I hate the sins that nailed You there. Now do I give myself to You, to serve You all my life. This is good evidence of salvation when a man can thus speak: "I hate sin, and I desire to serve Christ." You can see that he is saved from the power of sin—the power of the Cross has made him a new man! Oh Sinner, if you have no merit, you need not wish for any. Take Christ in your hands, for He is made of God unto you Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption; and all this for every soul of Adam born who trusts in Him alone.

But I hear you complaining again, "Oh, but I have not the power to repent. You have told me this, and I cannot believe—I cannot soften my heart; I am so powerless I cannot do anything. You have been teaching me that." I know I have, but there is another person in the Trinity, and what is His name? It is the Holy Spirit. And do you not know that the Holy Spirit helps our infirmity? Though we know not what to pray for as we ought, yet He teaches us to pray. It is true you are darkness, but then He is your Light. It is true you are naturally dead, but the Holy Spirit gives us life. And the Light of God is the Holy Spirit as He shows Himself to you. It is clear that you can do nothing without that Spirit; that should make you despair of self; but you can do everything with that Spirit. Now, lift those eyes of yours with which He has already taught you to weep; lift them up to the Throne and say, "My Father, if I may dare to call You by that name, help me to trust Your Son! My God, I see in Yourself a

Father's Love, in Your Son a Savior's Power, and in Your Spirit the Quickener's Life. Oh give me to feel Yourself within me, or, O God, if I may not feel it I will still believe it, for You cannot lie, and whether I have a comfortable evidence or not, I do this morning—utterly hopeless of anything in myself—I do this morning cast myself on You. "Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief." Why, Sinner, I do not know what it is that you may want, but I know one thing—it is provided for you in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and resting upon the great Savior whom God has provided, there is hope for you, my dear fellow creature, there is the brightness of a ray of hope this very morning, only may God turn it from a possible into an actual hope and give you a good hope of Eternal Life through believing in Jesus Christ.

Thus I have tried to turn you away from self to the Lord; but it may be I have some very hard cases to deal with; and so, two or three suggestions by way of smiting at the despair which some of you feel. A great Divine has said—and I think there is some truth in it—that a very great number of souls are destroyed through the fear that they cannot be saved. I think it is very likely. If some of you really thought that Christ could save you, if you felt a hope that you might yet be numbered with His people, you would say, "I will forsake my sins, I will leave my present evil way, and I will fly unto the strong for strength." Now though I have laid judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and sought to put the axe to the tree of all creature confidence, yet there is hope in Jesus Christ. There is hope in Jesus Christ, my dear Hearer, even for you, and I will give you these two or three reasons. In the first place, would it not be wise even if there were only a "perhaps," to go to Christ and trust Him on the strength of that? The king of Nineveh had no Gospel message, He had simply the Law preached by Jonah, and that very shortly and sternly. Jonah's message was, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," but the king of Nineveh said, "Who can tell?" And having nothing to rest upon—not a single word of promise—he humbled himself before God, he and his people, on the strength of a, "Who can tell?" Ah, my dear Hearers, take care lest the men of Nineveh rise up in judgment against you! You have got much more than a, "Who can tell?" Oh Sinner, you are saying, "I cannot be saved." But I ask you, Who can tell? "But I do not feel that there is hope." Who can tell? "But I am such a sinner." Who can tell? "Oh, but I am such a dull, heavy spirit! I cannot feel—there cannot be mercy for me." But who can tell? Surely if but on the presumption of "Who can tell?" the men of Nineveh went and found mercy, you will be inexcusable if you do not act upon the same, having much more than that to be your comfort. Go, Sinner, to the Cross, for who can tell?

But, in the next place, you have had many clear and positive examples. In reading Scripture through you find that many have been to Christ, and that there never was one cast out yet. If you had seen some repulsed, you might conclude that you must be among them, but not one has been rejected by the Savior. Why should you be? We need not turn to

books, there are living people here saved by Divine Grace. I myself am one. I had no more preparation for Christ than you have. I had not the shadow of anything to trust to any more than you have. When I heard the Gospel precept, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth," I did look, and I am saved. Oh Soul, I am the witness for my Master that He is true! In a moment, no sooner had I looked than I had joy and peace, and I can promise you the same! Those wounds of Christ still stream with Mercy, that head crowned with thorns still beams with the splendor of Grace. Do but look into His pierced side and you shall see a fount most deep and full, still flowing with blood and water to cleanse you, even *you*, from sin. Do not say you cannot come to Christ for He is not here—you cannot come upon your feet, but then your *thoughts* are the feet of your soul. Come to Him in thought, come to Him in confidence. Come to Him in trust, and you cannot trust Christ and yet be cast away. You have living examples.

Moreover you have comfortable promises in the Word of God. I was thinking much yesterday of this promise—I wonder whether God has sent it to my heart for any of you—*"Your hearts shall live that seek Him."* I was wondering whether I should preach from it, but anyhow it kept following me about—"Your hearts shall live that seek Him." If you seek Him your heart shall live. Leap on the back of that promise and let it bear you, as the Samaritan's beast bore the dying man to an inn where you may rest—I mean to Christ—where you may have confidence. Here is another. "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Now you do call upon His name. There are many others. They have been quoted in your ears till you know them by heart. "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." And you know that precious one, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

You see I had some black things to say at first; I had to tell you that the disease was incurable by natural means; but then the Supernatural Physician can remove it. I had to tell you that the ship was sinking and could not be saved, but I have now to point you to the Lifeboat which can never be wrecked. I had to warn you that your own arm is palsied, but I have to assure you that the Lord's arm is not so shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear. I had to remind you that you were hopeless bankrupts, and could not pay a farthing in the pound, but I have to assure you that He has paid all Believers' debts. I had to tell you that you were all so dirty in His sight that, in yourselves considered, you never could be accepted, but I have now to say, on the other hand, that every Believer is so clean and fair after being washed in Jesus' blood, that he is without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Away, you broken cisterns. Oh, for the hammer of God to dash you into shivers; but come, come, come you thirsty ones to the ever-flowing, overflowing Fountain. Here is nothing stinted; here is no shortness of supply, no illiberality of gift—come as you are! The Fountain flows freely and richly for you, who, having nothing in yourselves, are willing to have everything in Christ Jesus! Do not be saying, "There is no hope," for there is hope;

there is more—there is security, there is certainty to every soul that trusts in Jesus!

To conclude, do you not know, poor Sinner, you who believe in Jesus this morning—do you not know the news? Then I will tell you a secret. Do you not know that if you now prostrate yourself at the foot of the Cross, you are God's chosen one? Your name is engraved on the hands of Jesus, on the heart of God. Before the daystar knew its place or planets ran their round, before the primeval darkness was pierced by the sun's first ray, you were dear to the heart of Deity! You are His Elect, His beloved one—and do you not know that the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but the Covenant of His Love shall never depart from you? Neither shall His Grace be removed, said the Lord, who this morning has manifested His Mercy towards you! Though you are but just now converted, there is laid up for you in Heaven a crown of life that fades not away. Jesus pleads for you this very day. He this day prepares one of the many mansions for your eternal dwelling place. Be of good courage. Angels are singing, Heaven is rejoicing over you, the Church on earth is glad concerning you, and one day, when the great Shepherd shall appear, you also shall appear with Him in glory—and all this for you, poor helplessly ruined sinner; helpless in yourself, but saved in Christ Jesus! May God add a blessing to this simple testimony this morning and His shall be the praise.

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HEEDLESSNESS IN RELIGION
NO. 685

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 15, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But Jehu took no heed to walk in the Law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin."
2 Kings 10:31.

JEHU was raised up by God to be a great reformer in the kingdom of Israel. No sooner did he receive his commission than he was at his work with a daring and a perseverance never excelled. He was commanded to cut off the whole house of Ahab, and the task was a very congenial one—he slew right and left, and spared none. Unlike Saul with the Amalekites, who spared Agag and the best of the cattle, Jehu utterly exterminated the race whom God had doomed. When full vengeance had been worked upon Jezebel and all Ahab's brood, he scarcely paused by the way to congratulate himself and say to Jehonadab, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord," but proceeded at once to gather together all the priests of Baal and to annihilate them at a blow. He was a thorough root-and-branch reformer in this matter, and cut off the Baalites without remorse and without exception. He was not one of those who of old were cursed for doing the work of God deceitfully, holding back their hands from blood, but he made a thorough and clean sweep of the abominations of Baal worship, and accomplished the work for which he was raised up with the most wonderful thoroughness and zeal. *But*—oh, that but!—How unhappily does it mar everything!—*but* while he was thus ready and earnest in a work which suited his furious taste, he had no true heart toward God; while he was a destroyer of Baal he was not a servant of Jehovah, he was an iconoclast of the very first order, breaking idols right and left, but he was no builder up of the house of the Lord. He did not yield his mind reverently and obediently to the worship of Israel's God, neither did he care to know His mind and Law. He followed a sort of animal impulse, which drove him forward in opposition to Baal and to Ahab's race, but he knew nothing of that spiritual force which would have led him to inquire, "What more would God have me to do?"

His actions as God's executioner were right enough, but his heart was wrong. He was impulsive and impetuous, and drove furiously when the work was to his mind, but had no heart to other service for Jehovah. Having overthrown the worship of Baal, he almost immediately established another form of idolatry in its stead, and bade the nation prostrate itself before the calves of Bethel. Hating one sin, he loved another, and thus proved that the fear of the Most High did not reign in his breast. He was merely a hired servant and received the throne as his wages, but a child of God he never was; he did God's work, as did the lion who slew

the wicked Prophet, but he still remained a lion. Anxious care to know and serve God did not suit Jehu's headstrong disposition; he was all flash and dash, but careful, humble obedience he knew nothing of. Do not suppose that this rash heedless Jehu was a man alone and without a companion, he was, alas, only one of a very numerous class! I have selected the text because of an impression upon my own heart that the Jehus are increasing in our land, and that there will be found thoughtless professors in this congregation to whom this text may cause great searching of heart. I only trust that such may really be led to examine themselves, and use fitting tests to discover whether they are truly Believers in the great God of Israel, or are only hasty, inconsiderate, unrenewed imitators of Jehu. The fault of heedlessness of God's will which is mentioned in the text is a very terrible one, fatal to all our professions of genuine piety, and all hopes of entering into Eternal Life. While I speak upon the holy caution and earnest heed which the text suggests, may the Holy Spirit enable us all to search ourselves, whether we have received from the Lord by faith in Jesus a renewed heart which is anxious to know and to do the will of the Lord, or are mere creatures of impulse, picking and choosing as to our Lord's commands, and obeying or disobeying according as the circumstances of the hour may influence our thoughtless spirit.

In the first place this morning we shall have to speak upon *heedlessness in religion, showing the one peculiar point in which it mainly discovers itself;* then we shall proceed to testify, secondly, that *in this point heedlessness in religion is fatal;* we shall then, thirdly, go on *to show the usefulness of holy care and heedfulness;* and we shall close by *endeavoring to exhort you to practice that heedfulness before you leave this House of Prayer.*

I. First, may the Holy Spirit enable us to SHOW THE POINT IN WHICH HEEDLESSNESS MOST OF ALL DISPLAYS ITSELF.

Jehu took no heed to what? He took great heed to kill Ahab's family; he took great heed to totally destroy Baal's worshippers; but he took no heed to walk in the Law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart. This is the point in which a great many flaming professors show their lack of vital godliness, because they exercise no holy circumspection and show no anxiety to walk in the Law of the Lord their God with all their heart; which they would be very desirous of doing if they were saved. There are many, nowadays, who would be greatly disgusted with me if I did not admit them to be Christians, *who take no heed to even know God's will.* Many professors never gave themselves an hour's study of the Scriptures with a serious desire to ascertain God's way of salvation, and God's rule for a Believer's behavior in the Church and in the world. Multitudes of so-called Christians nowadays do not read their Bibles. My Hearers, do you? I would not malign modern Christendom, but I am persuaded that crowds of professors treat the Book of God with very wicked neglect; for we frequently meet with mistakes which are so absurd that no habitual students of the Word of God could have fallen into them. So many of you take your religion secondhand; you borrow it from the preacher; you

copy it from your grandmothers; you follow custom as your guide, and not the Voice of God; you do not search the Book of the Lord to discover whether these things are so or not. Why, great multitudes of people go blundering on like Jehu, supposing that they must be right; the uncomfortable but very prudent thought that perhaps all may be wrong has never occurred to them, and a resort to the "Law and to the Testimony" appears to them to be altogether superfluous.

Now, my dear Friends, I do not see how a servant can be thought to be faithful who is utterly careless as to his master's will. Solemnly I believe that some professors do not wish to know their Lord's will too thoroughly; there are certain duties whose performance would be unpleasant, and therefore they do not want to have their consciences too much enlightened upon the subject; they shun the Light lest they should stand reproved. Brothers and Sisters, if I am afraid of the Light of God, let me rest assured that for some evil reason I have good cause to be afraid of it! If my Doctrinal opinions or my daily actions are such that I dare not put them into the scale of God's Word, and give them a thorough pondering, I have reason to suspect that I shall be found wanting at the last. Oh that every one of us would diligently seek with humble and obedient spirit to sit at Jesus' feet and learn of Him! "Lord, what would You have me to do?" is the cry of the regenerate soul. Carnal religionists go driving on with headlong inconsiderateness, but spiritual minds pause, and ponder, and inquire, and all with the one aim—to be sound in the statutes of the Lord.

Furthermore, I am afraid that there are some who if they take any care to know, do not take heed to practice the Lord's will. If they think at all they come to the conclusion that certain commands are grievous, and they postpone all practical attention to them. They claim to be obedient in principle but not in practice; whereas a man who professes to hold a principle which he does not practice is a person without any principle whatever, except a shockingly bad one. My dear Friends, if I am truly the Lord's servant, I shall feel that I must make haste and delay not in all things to walk according to His will, and though mournfully conscious of many infirmities and imperfections, yet at any rate I shall heartily desire to practice what I know. Beware, dear Friends, of letting the head grow at a great rate while the arm is shriveled. Knowledge involves a responsibility which will end in many stripes for disobedience. It is treason for a commander to be well-versed in military tactics, and to be great in arms, and yet to refuse to defend his country and allow the empire to go to ruin. Practical Christianity alone is true Christianity. The Lord give us such! May we sit down and solemnly say to ourselves, "What is that which I know to be God's will, which I have neglected to perform? Lord help me to attend to it now." Dear Friends, we are saved by Divine Grace alone, but when saved we become obedient children, and are no longer as thoughtless Jehu.

But further, there are some who both know the will of God and practice it after a fashion; but they do not practice it as having Divine authority about it. In submitting ourselves especially to the ordinances of the

Christian religion, we bring a vain oblation if we merely submit to them because of custom or because of the authority of the church. We must bow to each command of this Book because it is God's command; and our course of life must not he guided by the impression that such-and-such a thing is respectable, but by the consciousness that we are the servants of the Most High, and that whatever He said unto us it is our privilege to perform. We ought to pray that we may run in the way of God's commandments, but in addition to that, that we may be moved to run in that way because it is the way of God's commandments. To obey mechanically is scarcely becoming in the servant of so great and gracious a God. It has been well observed that the early Christians did as much speak of *obedience* to Christ as of *devotion* to Him, which is far higher than obedience. Consecration to Jesus should be the ruling passion of our soul. Beloved, let the Word of Jesus be an irresistible force with us; let us follow because Jesus leads. That was a mighty cry which was once profaned to purposes of fanaticism under the preaching of Peter the Hermit, *"Deus vult,"* "God wills it." It sounded through Christendom, it made monarchs exchange their crowns for helmets, it made the artisan throw down his hammer to grasp the spear, it changed men's plowshares into swords, and their pruning hooks into spears—and they rushed to die in Palestine, under the dominant idea of clearing that Holy Land from Pagan intrusion. Oh that such an impulse would go through Christendom again for a higher and a nobler purpose, *"Deus vult!"* The Lord wills it! Let truth banish error! Let superstition yield to the Gospel! Let forms and ceremonies fly before the Doctrines of Free Grace! Let every knee bow at the name of Jesus, because *"Deus vult!"* Let the Crucified be everywhere adored, for God wills it. If this force shall not move all Christendom, at any rate let it influence our own hearts, and may we take heed to God's commandments because they express His will.

It is added once more in the text that the heedlessness of Jehu showed itself in his not giving heed to all the Law of the Lord God of Israel *with all his heart.* Shall I impeach the present age? No, but still might the impeachment well be against it, that the most of us do not serve God with all our hearts. Oh the ardor with which men pursue after fortunes! Oh the rages with which they covet wealth! Oh the power of that force which impels the man of science to spend his life in toilsome research! Why should not a rage of a nobler kind seize us? Why should we not be equally devoted to the Master's cause? The half-heartedness of the most of us is that which prevents our glorifying Christ. We preach, but not as dying men to dying men. We pray, but not as Jacob wrestled with the Angel. We give, but not as bounteous givers. We seek to live in holiness, but not with that enthusiasm which becomes the Cross of Christ. Dear Friends, we fear that the text has a bearing upon us all; but there are some to whom it is almost a sentence of death, for though they know God's will and do it in a measure, yet they do not attend to it with their hearts. Remember, you may conscientiously carry out whatever you believe to be God's will externally, but unless the heart gives its obedience you have no evidence of being the subject of Divine Grace; for it is the heart which

Grace wins and which God claims—and till the heart is yielded nothing is yielded. You may be baptized, and re-baptized, you may come to the communion as often as you will, you may sit in your pew, you may hear, no, you may preach and even give your body to be burned, but if your heart does not give itself to God, if you love Him not, if you feel no attachment to His Person—all that you have done is merely the natural effect of excitement or free will, and not the work of Divine Grace; but when the heart cleaves to God, when the soul is fixed upon Him, when we throw our whole being into every act of service, then it is that we are distinguished as the quickened, called, elect, the people of God who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

Thus I have tried to set forth where the mischief lay in the matter of Jehu—that he did not care to know the whole of God's will. If he knew it, he did not study to practice it; he did not yield obedience because it was God's will, and never yielded his whole heart to the love of God. Observe, before we leave this point, that Jehu was very angry at other people's sins, and that we may be too, and yet never be delivered from our own. It is a very fine sight to see a man work himself up into a furor against drunkenness—he himself never having been guilty of it. It is true that all the indignation which he pours upon it, it well deserves, for is it not an infamous sin, the great net of the devil in which he catches multitudes? But I may be a very earnest temperance man and hate drunkenness most fiercely, and I may be a child of the devil notwithstanding all that. I may be very furious against adultery, or theft, or immorality of some other kind which I do not happen to practice myself, yet my own sins may cry out against me; and it will not be possible to justify my own sins by denouncing those of others. It is a very cheap sort of virtue that, bullying other people's vices; the easiest thing in all the world is to be constantly denouncing popular faults; but to wring the neck of one of my own bosom sins is a harder work by far, and a much better sign of conversion. To be earnest against the sin of others may be praiseworthy, but it is no sign of Divine Grace in the heart; for natural men have been some of the greatest leaders in this matter. To loathe my own sin, to humble myself on account of my own personal faults, and to endeavor in the sight of God to renounce every false way, is a work of something more than human nature.

Will you also notice Jehu was very bitter against one sin. The very mention of the name of Baal brought the blood into his face, and there are persons in the world who cannot bear some one sin to which they have aversion; they love to hammer away against that; their whole soul takes fire at the mention of it. This is all very well; but, unless you hate all sin, unless you hate especially the besetting sin which is most congenial to your own nature, you need to be converted. Christ does not make some things new, but all things new; and He does not teach us to cut off one lust and to indulge another, but a clean sweep must by God's Grace be made of the love of all sin.

Once more, Jehu did obey God up to a certain point. It happened to be a profitable thing to him to exterminate the old royal house of Ahab, be-

cause it would confirm himself upon his own throne; but anything beyond that did not pay, and therefore Jehu did not touch it. Some virtues pay well, and prudent people go in for them at once. These remunerative graces are very much admired; but poverty-stricken virtues have few patrons. If it had paid Jehu better to save Ahab, he would have been slow to kill him; and when it answered his purpose to set up the golden calves, he had no scruples in doing so. Many men turn aside from religion when their interest would be compromised. If I see two men walking together, I cannot tell who is the master of the dog that is behind them, but I shall discover directly; one of them will turn to the right and the other to the left—now I shall know who is the master of the dog, for when it comes to the turning point, the dog will go with its master and leave the stranger. You cannot always tell whether it is God or Mammon that a man is serving when virtue is profitable; but when it comes to the turning point, and the man has to be a loser for Christ, in what he gives up for Christ's sake, then sincerity is tried. Turning points are places where we may judge ourselves, for they are the only true criteria of our real character.

II. HEEDLESSNESS IN THE POINT INDICATED IS FATAL. It is fatal because it manifests *that sin is not hated.* A particular form of sin is abhorred, but since another is indulged, it is evident that there is no hate towards sin itself. Jehu would have said, "I hate idolatry. See how I have broken the image of Baal!" Yes; but see how you have set up the golden calves. It was not hatred of idolatry, *per se* and in itself, but hatred to that particular form of it which consisted in the worship of Baal. So you do not hate sin if you only hate some one sin. All iniquity will be distasteful in your sight if God the Holy Spirit has really made you to loathe iniquity. If I say to a person, "I will not receive you into my house when you come dressed in such a coat," but if I open the door to him when he has on another suit which is more respectable, it is evident that my objection was not to the person but to his clothes. If a man will not cheat when the transaction is open to the world but will do so in a more secret way, or in a kind of adulteration which is winked at in the trade, the man does not hate cheating—he only hates that kind of it which is sure to be found out—he likes the thing itself very well. Some sinners say they hate sin. Not at all; sin in its essence is pleasing enough—it is only a glaring shape of it which they dislike.

Heedlessness indicates that *self is not subdued.* You say that you have given up a certain sin, but you will not attend to such-and-such a command of Christ—what does this prove? Why, that the great I is still predominating; self is never subdued unless it is subdued in all matters. Unless I can say, "Lord, I delight to do *all* Your will, and I long to be thoroughly conformed to it in *all* respects," self is not subdued. That is a proud spirit which says, "I shall do this but not that." A servant is not to pick and choose as to his duties; he then becomes the master; he has arrogated to himself a position to which he has no right if he makes any selection whatever in what his master bids him do. Self is unhumbled

and the soul is unrenewed, however high the pretensions, unless the man is willing to submit to Christ in *everything*.

Again; *your faith is not a living faith.* We are saved by faith in Christ, and not by our works, but if, my dear Friend, you can harbor and pamper any one sin, and delight in it, you have not the faith of God's Elect. If, my Brother, there is some known command of God against which you set yourself, and say, "Though I know it to be the command of Christ, yet I shall not obey it," you are not acting consistently with the obedience of faith; for Faith must obey her Master's will as well as trust His Grace. I know that what I am saying is not very pleasant to certain of you; but we are not sent to preach pleasant things to you, we are to deliver the healthful Truth of God. I pray it may be sanctified to my own soul and to yours also. You do not wish to be deceived, any of you. I am sure the most earnest Christian here is the one who is most willing to search himself. Better for us to have our eyes opened here than to go dreaming on, and find out our mistake in Hell. The Lord give us never to be afraid of a cutting Truth of God nor a cutting sermon; but rather to invite a heart-searching minister to deal faithfully with us. Beloved, I pray you to remember your spirit cannot have been humbled, and your faith cannot be a living faith if it makes exceptions with regard to the Master's will and kicks at this or that; you do really in fact rebel against God Himself when you rebel against His will.

And again, a presumptuous lack of care as to serving God *is very dishonoring to the Most High.* This kind of harum scarum religion, this hit or miss godliness, this do the thing that anybody else does, but never stop to look at it, has in it a sad lack of true reverence to God. True reverence to God makes me stop every now and then, and say, "Is this my Master's will?" It makes me go to the Record to see whether I am comporting myself according to the Master's orders; it brings me to a solemn position of inquiry where I have to look on the right hand, and on the left, and say, "Am I really right here? Am I serving myself or my God? Am I now under a Divine impulse, or only subject to my own human passion?" If you do not thus pause, I do not think you have a proper regard for the Most High. If one of us should be sent as an ambassador from the Queen on some important business, when we received our orders we would be very diligent to know what they were; and I can suppose our putting our hand into our bosom, for we would be sure to keep the document there close to our heart, taking it out often and looking at it to know exactly what was to be done. I am sure we would say, "If I should make a mistake here it shall be through lack of power, it shall not be through deficiency of care and caution."

Dear Hearers, we ought not to be serving God blunderingly, we ought not to rush into His service and rush out again without setting our hearts toward Him. The Lord does not require of us to serve Him with half our heads or half our hearts; but the service of God is worthy of all the light which my understanding can give me. I would not only serve Him with my heart having a good motive, but feeling that He bought my head with His precious blood, I would try to obey Him with my under-

standing, saying to Him, "Lord, teach me what You would have me to do, and how You would have me to do it." Jesus deserves our whole man in the most educated state; and the true Christian will not be satisfied to give to Jesus merely passion, and impulse, and excitement, but he will put himself under the instruction of the great Teacher, and say, "Lord, teach me Your statutes, that I may run in the way of Your commandments."

Once more, after all, dear Friends, if we are heedless in the service of God, and will not think it worth our while to find out or to do our Master's will, is there not grave cause for suspicion that *the very heart of our religion is rotten?* Do not think me harsh, but I must again press it upon you; it is the easiest thing in the world, Beloved, for you and for me to think that we are converted, and to get into the notion that we have enjoyed such-and-such experiences. It is very easy for some to say they are Christians, but it will not be found so easy *to be one.* Hear the words of Paul: "If the righteous are scarcely saved." "For strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads unto life eternal." Now, if I wickedly in my soul say that I will not desire to know my Lord's will, or if I know it, but will not yield it obedience; if I practice it, I will do it lightly without giving my soul to it. What worse heart can any mere worldling have than this? How can corrupt nature be more thoroughly discovered? Of the two I think I would sooner see you lay down your profession than hold it with a reserve. It were better for you to be ostensibly the enemies of God than to be nominally His friends only up to a certain point. God save us from the shadow of hypocrisy!

I am conscious that I have been touching some sore points here, for with a great many even in our own churches, let alone those who are in the Church of England and so on, it really is not with them a question as to what the Lord would have them to do. Some are guided by their family connections—"Why do I do so-and-so? Well, you see it is a thing I was brought up to do." The same theory would render all the heathen heathens forever, and every man would go down to Hell whose father went there. Many persons receive their religion as they received their names; they got their names when they were unconscious, and they obtained their religion, or rather *irreligion*, at the same time. I do not believe I am bound to do what my grandmother did. She was, I doubt not, an admirable woman, and has gone to Heaven, but I do not believe God put the brains that were to guide me into her head. I think He put my understanding and my brains into my head, and that under the guidance of His Holy Spirit I am myself, to search this Bible. God did not put the Bible into my father's hands that He might construct certain notions which should bind his son, but He placed the Bible in each Christian's own hands that he might come there and say, "Lord, what would You have *me* to do?" It is a very ill reason to give for a practice, "I do so-and-so because my family did the same before me," and it is a worse reason, if possible, to say, "We do it because you see it is a general thing, and a respectable thing." The general thing is the wrong thing in nine cases out of ten. Christ's Church is not so predominant yet anywhere as that the

general thing shall ever become the right thing. It is folly to be singular, except when to be singular is to be right, but that happens to be very, very often, indeed.

Some, on the other hand, who do not follow tradition, follow mere excitement. They happen to be what they now are as professors because they were persuaded into it by an eloquent preacher; they were excited, and they did so. Besides, they did it, they say, from a good motive which is certainly better than no excuse at all; but my doing wrong from a good motive does not make the wrong right, especially when I might have enlightened myself and have found out what was the right. If I persistently shut up my Bible and say, "Now I shall do whatever I think to be right," I am like a person who at night puts out his lantern and cries, "Now I shall walk whichever way I think to be right." If he tumbles into a ditch, it will be very little consolation that he followed his best judgment. Why did he not follow the light which he had about him?

Some professing Christians also give themselves up to their taste. They believe a Doctrine because they like it, or they follow a practice because they think it is very appropriate, or perhaps pretty. As if taste could be any better than a mere Will-o'-the-wisp as a guide in religion. It is not possible for me to be a servant of God at all while I set up my own whims to be my rule of action. Beloved, there are many others whose religion is one constant piece of thoughtlessness—they never consider at all—and though this matter may not strike you as important, I am persuaded the message I am delivering is needed by the great mass of Christians. Do not serve God thoughtlessly; do not come to any devout exercises merely because it is the time and season for them, but take heed, weigh the matter, see what you are doing, do not rush into God's Presence, do not worship because others do so, but take heed and consider, and then, deliberately in God's strength, whether others do so or not, perform the Lord's will with your whole heart.

III. I will now come to the third point, and that is that CAREFUL THOUGHT WITH REGARD TO ALL GOD'S WILL IS MOST USEFUL.

Because, in the first place, a man who gives heed to walk in all the Lord's will with all his heart proves that he has the true serving spirit. He has become a servant, for his eyes were up to God as the eyes of the handmaiden towards her mistress. He has the true child-like spirit, for he says to his Father, "Father, tell me what You would have me do and be." He has the true believing spirit, for he no longer walks by the sight of his eyes and the will of the flesh, but desires to be conformed to the mind of the invisible God. And he has evidently a humbled spirit, since he puts his own will in subjection to Divine Grace, to the will of God, and his desire is, "Not my will, but Yours be done." Cultivate, Beloved, cultivate carefulness with regard to God's will for you, because it will be to you one of the best and clearest evidences that Divine Grace reigns in your heart.

In the next place, this heedfulness is precious because *it will prevent much evil.* There are scores of things which are now done that never would be done again if Christians would only think. If we could once get

a thoughtful believing church, we should not be long without having a reformed church. Beloved, it was because Luther was led by God to proclaim that Doctrine of Justification by Faith that we received the Reformation. Do not think there was nobody in the world who believed that when Luther preached it; there were thousands of holy men and women who had trusted in Christ and were trusting in Christ; but they did not see the necessity of proclaiming on the housetops that Truth of God which in secret they lived upon; and it was only when Luther made them think whether they ought to be in communion with a church which denies this vital point—it was only then that they dreamed of coming out from the old Romish church, and began to declare more boldly the Truth as it is in Jesus. You will be saved all sorts of troubles in Providence, if like David, you will stay awhile, and say, "Bring here the ephod." If instead of running right on without looking, you will say, "Lord, where does the cloud lead me? Where does the finger of Providence direct me?" You will be saved many bitter tears, and your path will be more happy and pleasant to yourself.

A heedful spirit, moreover, finds out God's will. God's will is not such a mystery as some would have us think. This is such a Book that he who wills to understand it, by God's Grace shall understand. Come here in spirit, willing to know, and you will know. Come here with a desire to do what God would have you do, and you shall soon be well taught. You need not submit to a priest, nor allow the judgment of another to domineer over your intellect—

"This is the judge that ends the strife,
Where wit and reason fail;
My guide to Everlasting Life
Through all this gloomy vale."

A heedful spirit is particularly necessary to certain persons. A man with a quick spirit like Jehu ought to be the more heedful. Some Brothers and Sisters are born with a passionate disposition. Certain men are readily subject to impulses. Those of us who are cool and calculating will probably not err here; but the more impulsive brethren should look well to this duty of taking heed to the whole of God's will, or else before they know it, they may be the dupes of imposters. Under the notion of duty you may run into all sorts of mischief. If men would go to God about every matter, they would not talk so many crude things nor do so many absurd things as they now do. How necessary this heedfulness is to the preacher! If he does not take care what he publishes he will do much more mischief than he will do good. How heedful you Sunday school teachers, and you who are teachers of any sort should be. If you do not look to your actions, you may have good motives, but your example will not be very good. How necessary this is to the parent, because if the parent falls into an error, his children will imitate him in his vices far sooner than his virtues. How necessary is this in certain positions! You who work with ungodly men, you who are thrown into worldly company, how heedful should you be! You will never be right unless you are watchful. "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Watchfulness will be sure to take this turn of an anxious desire to give heed to all the Lord's will.

Would I have you precise? "Yes," said a Puritan, "I am precise, for I serve a precise God." Would I have you careful and jealous? Yes, you serve a jealous God! There is no fear in this age that I can draw this string too tightly; for laxity is, alas, too much the common practice. Oh, Beloved, may we come back again, not to the gloom of Puritanism, but still to the rigidity of its obedience, to its stern tenacity of all its convictions, and its determination sooner to die than to yield the very least point of the will of God! If we had more of this the church would be much more blessed than it is.

Let me say once more that this heedful spirit will be a great blessing to you Christians because of that which it will lead to. If I do not take heed to do the Lord's will, I shall soon miss the society of Jesus. Christ walks most closely with those who walk most closely with the Divine Will. If I set up an idol in my heart, I cannot expect Jesus Christ to come and talk familiarly with me, and sup with me in the presence of that idol. If I am knowingly, or even through a willful ignorance, unknowingly doing that which He does not approve of, I cannot expect His smile. We are not saved by works, we repeat it, but still much of our communion with Christ does depend upon the hearty sincerity of our obedience. "If you keep My commandments you shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's Commandments, and abide in His love." May the Holy Spirit bring us, then, for all these reasons, into a heedful and careful spirit!

IV. We must finish by trying to urge you TO PRACTICE CARE AT ONCE. And I would appeal to all present in these few words—Dear Friends, may I ask you all to answer to yourselves this question, Is my hope which I possess at the present moment truly placed where all true hope must be? Are you giving heed in the matter of your hope to walk according to the commandment? What is the commandment? This is the commandment, That you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent. No question can be more important than this. Are you resting and depending upon Jesus Christ alone, and with all your heart? If not, you may as well give up all pretensions to godliness, for you have not got any if you have not begun on this foundation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid." Come, there can be no exceptions here! That excellent disposition, that charitable action, that devout ceremony—all that is nothing at all unless you begin by disclaiming all good works and all human merits, and come to rest upon the Lord Jesus, and upon His finished work and Righteousness. Now, that is the first question to begin with. Christian, if you can get over that, and say, "Yes, blessed be God, I do in that respect walk according to the commandment," then next I want you, Christian, to answer this—Is there anything in which you are now indulging which you know to be wrong, or which you might know to be wrong if you took the trouble to search? Then I charge you, by your allegiance to Christ, give it up now! One leak sinks a ship, and one sin really harbored will be a proof that the Grace of God is not in you. You may fall into one sin, no, fall into 50 sins and yet be a Christian; but *you cannot live in one sin, and love one sin and be a Christian,* for it is indis-

pensably necessary to vital godliness that all sin should be the subject of your heart's disapproval.

What about this? My dear Brothers and Sisters saved in Christ—is there any *one* command of your Master which you have neglected? I shall give no hints about what it may happen to be, for it may be a different one in every case. But is there one thing that you might do for Christ which you have not done? Is there one service which you might render to your Master which you have not rendered? Then I charge you, as you hope to be found approved in the Day of Judgment, and by the sincerity of your attachment to your Lord, see that that one thing is done, and done at once with all your heart.

How I wish that I had the power to press home this matter! I feel as if I had one of the largest subjects to handle, and had the very smallest power to bring it home. Beloved, do not let us be among those who have the name to live and are dead, and who prove that they are dead by lacking the heart which clings to God! I know you cannot be perfect in life, but you must be desirous to be perfect. You cannot give up every sin, practically, I know; through infirmity we fall into some sin or another; but the heart must give up every sin, or else it is a rotten heart in which God does not dwell; and the heart must be obedient to every command, or else it is not a heart in which Jesus Christ has come to reign. The Lord purge the inside, and the outside will soon be right enough. May He make clean the inside of the cup and the platter, then the exterior will be cleansed, too; but may the Lord grant that this work be seen to at once!

As for you professors who have felt this sermon cut you, may it cut you; may it kill your hopes, may it drive you to self-despair, and may it lead you to Christ; and when you come to Christ and trust in Him, then I know you will cry—

"Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I'd burn!
Chosen of Him before time began,
I choose Him in return."

God bless this sermon of admonition, and make it profitable to every hearer, and His shall be the praise. Amen.

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OBEDIENCE BETTER THAN SACRIFICE
NO. 686

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

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Samuel 15:22.

SAUL had been commanded to utterly slay all the Amalekites and their cattle. Instead of doing so, he spared the king, and allowed his people to take the best of the oxen and of the sheep. When called to account for this, he declared that he did it with a view of offering sacrifice to God; but Samuel met him at once with the assurance that such sacrifices were no excuse for an act of direct rebellion, and in so doing he altered his sentence, which is worthy to be printed in letters of gold, and to be hung up before the eyes of the present generation: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

I think that in this verse—and here I shall mainly dwell—there is first a voice *to professing Christians,* and then, secondly, *to unconverted persons.*

I. First, I will speak to you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, and who have made a PROFESSION of your faith in Him.

Be it ever in your remembrance, that to obey, to keep strictly in the path of your Savior's command, is better than any outward form of religion, and to hearken to His precepts with an attentive ear is better than to bring the fat of rams or anything else which you may wish to lay upon His Altar.

Probably, there are some of you here tonight who may be living in the neglect of some known duty. It is no new thing for Christians to know their duty, to have their conscience enlightened about it, and yet to neglect it. If you are failing to keep the least of one of Christ's commands to His disciples, I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, be disobedient no longer. I know, for instance, that some of you can see it to be your duty, as Believers, to be baptized. If you did not think it to be your duty, I would not bring this text to bear upon you; but if you feel it is right, and you do it not, let me say to you that all the pretensions you make of attachment to your Master, and all the other actions which you may perform, are as nothing compared with the neglect of this. "To obey," even in the slightest and smallest thing, "is better than sacrifice," and to hearken diligently to the Lord's commands is better than the fat of rams. It may be that some of you, though you are professed Christians, are living in the prosecution of some evil trade, and your conscience has often said, "Get out of it." You are not in the position that a Christian ought to be in; but then you hope that you will be able to make a little

money, and you will retire and do a world of good with it. Ah, God cares nothing for this rams' fat of yours; He asks not for these sacrifices which you intend to make. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Perhaps you are in connection with a Christian church in which you may see much that is wrong, and you know that you ought not to tolerate it, but still you do so. You say, "I have a position of usefulness, and if I come out I shall not be as useful as I am now." My Brother, your usefulness is but as the fat of rams, and "to obey is better than" it all. The right way for a Christian to walk in is to do what his Master bids him, leaving all consequences to the Almighty. You have nothing to do with your own usefulness further than to keep your Master's commands at all hazards and under all risks. "I counsel you to keep the King's commandments," and, "whatever He said unto you, do it." Sit at His feet with Mary, and learn of Him, and when you rise up from that reverent posture, let it be with the prayer—

"Help me to run in Your commands,
'Tis a delightful road;
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,
Offend against my God."

Possibly, too, dear Brother, there may be some evil habit in which you are indulging, and which you excuse by the reflection, "Well, I am always at the Prayer Meeting; I am constantly at communion, and I give so much of my substance to the support of the Lord's work." I am glad that you do these things; but oh, I pray you give up that sin! I pray you cut it to pieces and cast it away, for if you do not, all your show of sacrifice will be but an abomination. The first thing which God requires of you as His beloved is obedience; and though you should preach with the tongue of men and of angels, though you should give your body to be burned, and your goods to feed the poor, yet if you do not hearken to your Lord, and are not obedient to His will, all besides shall profit you nothing.

It is a blessed thing to be teachable as a little child, and to be willing to be taught of God; but it is a much more blessed thing, still, when one has been taught to go at once and carry out the lesson which the Master has whispered in his ear. How many excellent Christians there are who sacrifice a goodly flock of sheep so as to replenish the Altar of our God who nevertheless are faulty because they obey not the Word of the Lord? Look at our Missionary Society's list of subscribers, and ask yourself the question, Do all these help the spread of the Gospel by obedience to the precept, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"? There you see in the money gift the sacrifice, but better far to have obedience. Both ought to be joined together; but of the two, better is the act of obedience than of giving. Noah's sacrifice sent up a sweet savor before God, but in God's sight the obedience which led him to build the ark and enter in with his family was far more precious; and for this his

name is written among the champions of faith, and handed down to us as a word of honor and renown.

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, to obey is better than sacrifice in the matter of caring for the sick and needy of all classes. We rejoice in the number of hospitals which adorn our cities. These are the princely trophies of the power of our holy religion. To these we triumphantly point as among the ripe fruits of that Christianity which is for the healing of the nations, chiefly in a spiritual, but also in the physical aspect of man's diseased and miserable state. There are no nobler words in our language than those inscribed on so many walls—"Supported by voluntary contributions." We glory in them. Rome's monuments, Grecian trophies, Egyptian's mighty tombs, and Assyria's huge monoliths, are dwarfed into petty exhibitions of human pride and vanity before the sublime majesty of these exhibitions of a God-given love to our fellow men; but all these homes of mercy and healing become evils to ourselves though they are blessings to the distressed, if we contribute of our wealth to their financial support and neglect personally to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, to feed the hungry, to care for the sick, and do not, like the Master, go about doing good. Give as God has given to you; but remember God acts as well as gives. "Go you and do likewise." Sacrifice, but also obey. A cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, and in obedience to the Lord, is a golden deed valued by our heavenly Master above all price, more precious in His sight than silver, yes, than much fine gold.

I put this very earnestly to the members of this Church, and, indeed, to all of you who hope that you are followers of Christ—Is there anything that you are neglecting? Is there any sin in which you are indulging? Is there any voice of conscience to which you have turned a deaf ear? Is there one passage of Scripture which you dare not look in the face, because you are living in neglect of it? Then let Samuel's voice come to you, and set you seeking for more Divine Grace, for "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

II. But my main business tonight is with the UNCONVERTED; and may the Master give us Grace to deal with them affectionately, faithfully, and earnestly!

My Hearer, in the first place, God has given to you in the Gospel dispensation a command. It is a command in the obeying of which there is Eternal Life, and the neglect of which will be and must be your everlasting ruin; that command is this: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The Gospel does not come to you as the Law does, and say, "Do this and you shall live," it speaks as in the language of Isaiah the Prophet, and says, "Hearken diligently unto Me; hear, and your souls shall live." It tells you that whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and it bids the heralds of the Cross go out and cry, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned." To use the expressive language of the

beloved Apostle John, "This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." To believe is to trust, to trust with your whole heart, and whoever trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ with his whole heart has the promise of Eternal Life. No, if that act is sincere, it is the *result* of Eternal Life already given. God, the Just One, must punish sin, therefore He must punish you; but Jesus Christ became Man, and stood and smarted in the sinner's place, that whoever trusts in Him might neither smart nor suffer because God punished Christ in the place of every man who comes to Christ and rests upon Him. To trust in Jesus, therefore, is God's first and great commandment of salvation. Now, listen, Sinner! God commands you to keep this, and surely He has a right to do so. If He wills to save, He has a Sovereign right to choose His own way of saving. If a man gives to the poor he may do so as he wills, whether he gives at this door or at that, or through the window; and so God is pleased to use the door of simple faith as the only door through which to bestow mercy on the sons of men.

And not only has He a right to choose this way, but it is the only way that would suit you. If God determined to save none but those who kept His Law, what would become of you? If He only gave Divine Grace to the holy and to the good, where would you be? But the way of faith suits, and readily suits, one who has broken God's commandments. Though a sinner is dying, though he may be on the cross like the dying thief, yet, as the way of salvation is but a looking at Christ, there is hope for him even in the last extremity that he may still be able to look and live. Why should you kick against God's way when it is the best to suit you, when none can be more suitable, none more simple? He has chosen it because it is a way which honors His dear Son. Your trusting Jesus gives Glory to Jesus, and therefore God delights in your faith. And, besides, it brings a blessing to your own soul. To trust in Christ is in itself a blessing. It is humbling, but it is comforting. It empties you, but it fills you; it strips you, but it clothes you. Faith has a double action like a two-edged sword. It kills pride, but at the same time it heals the wound it gave by giving to the sinner trust in Jesus. To trust Jesus is the best conceivable way I can imagine by which a sinner can be reconciled unto God through the blood of the Great Redeemer. I pray you, therefore, be not angry because God is gracious; be not rebellious when the still small Voice says, "Look, Sinner, look to Him who died upon the tree, and by that look you shall live."

Now, this first point being clear, that God has given a command, the second remark is that the most of men, instead of obeying God, *want to bring Him sacrifices.* They suppose that their own way of salvation is much better than any that the Almighty can have devised, and therefore they offer their fat of rams. This takes different forms, but it is always the same principle. One man says, "Well now, I will give up my pleasures; you shall not see me at the ballroom, you shall not catch me at the theater, I will forsake the music hall, you shall not discover me in low

company; I will give up all the things that my heart calls good, and will not that save me?" No, it will not. When you have made all this sacrifice, all I shall, or can say of it is, "To obey is better than sacrifice." "Well, but suppose I begin to attend a place of worship? Suppose I go very regularly, and as often as the doors are open? Suppose I go to early matins, and to the evening song? Suppose I attend every day in the week where the bell is always going? Suppose I come to the sacrament and am baptized? Supposing I go through with the thing, and give myself thoroughly up to all outward observances; will not all this save me?" No, nor will it even help you to being saved. These things will no more save you than husks will fill your hungry belly; it is not the husks you need, you need the corn, and so, poor Soul, you do not need external ceremonies, you need the inward substance, and you will never get that except by trusting Jesus Christ. There was a time when doctrine was far more highly valued than is now the case with some Christians. You will often meet with those who seem to value men by their contributions to Church funds rather than by their soundness in the faith. Now, if I am to judge men at all, I prize the man who listens to God's Voice far more than the one who can bring the "fat of rams" to the altar of God's House. A rich heretic I would reject and put from me, while the poor but obedient God-fearing disciple I would welcome with all my heart. An ear always open to listen to God's Voice, a heart ever soft to receive the impress of God's teaching—these are far more precious than a handful of silver and gold, and a mouth promising large things, for "to hearken is better than the fat of rams."

All the costly gifts cast into the treasury are valuable chiefly as representing an inner spirit of devotion and of self-consecration. They may exist as outward acts without the living spirit which gives them value in God's eyes. We need, therefore, to cultivate the soul, and to see that that sacred spirit of devout submission dwells within us which dwelt in Him, who not only sacrificed Himself on the Cross, being obedient unto death, but always lived in that state of heart which was embodied in His prayer, "Nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done." Would the washing of the windows of a house make the inhabitants clean? Does the painting and ornamenting of the exterior of a mansion make the dwellers in it healthier or holier men? We read of devils entering into a clean swept and garnished house, and the last end of that man was worse than the first. All the outward cleansing is but the gilding of the bars of the cage full of unclean birds; the whitewashing of sepulchers full of rottenness and dead men's bones. Washing the outside of a box will leave all the clothes inside as foul as ever. Remember therefore that all that you can do in the way of outward religion is nothing but the sacrifice of the fat of rams, and "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

"Yes," says another, "but suppose I punish myself a good deal for all that I have done? I will abstain from this, I will deny myself that, I will

mortify myself in this passion, I will give up that evil." Friend, if you have any evil give it up; but when you have done so do not rely upon that, for this you ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. God's command is, "Believe," and if you should go about to sacrifice your lusts till they are bleeding like a sacrifice of bullocks upon the altar, yet I must say to you, as Samuel sternly said to Saul, "To obey is better than to sacrifice, and to hearken to the Gospel message is better than all this fat of rams."

But it is thought by some if they should add to all this a good deal of generosity, surely they will be saved. "Suppose I give money to the poor, build a lot of alms-houses, and help to build a church? Suppose I am generous even beyond my means, will not this help me?" Sinner, why do you ask such a question? God has set before you a door, an open door, and over it is written, "Believe and live," and yet you go about and wander abroad to find another door! What is all your gold worth, Man? Why, Heaven is paved with it! All the gold you have would not buy a single slab of the eternal pavement, and do you think to enter there by way of your giving to the poor? If God were hungry He would not tell you, for His are the cattle on a thousand hills, and His are the mines of silver, and the sparkling ores of gold. The diamond, and the topaz, and the chrysolite are all His own, and His eyes see them hidden in their secret veins and lodes, and do you think to bribe the Eternal with your paltry purse? Oh, do you understand that "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"?

"Yes, but," says the sinner, "if I could add to all this a great deal of confidence in those good men who are recognized by the world as priests? Suppose I put myself into their bonds? I would not go to the Roman Catholics, for I do not like them much, but supposing I go to the Episcopalians—for they have priests, too, and sprinkle children with holy water, and bury the reprobate dead, in 'sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection to everlasting life'—could not they do something for me? Or suppose I go to some Dissenting minister, and put myself under his care, cannot he help me?" No, Sir, there is nothing in us that can help you one jot. We hate the very thought of being priests—I would sooner be a devil than be a priest with the exception of being what all Christians are—priests unto God. Let me justify that strong remark; of all pretensions on earth there is none so detestable as the pretense of being able to bestow Divine Grace upon men, and of standing between their souls and God. Beloved, we are your servants for Christ's sake, but as for any priestly authority to give Grace to you, we shake off the imputation as Paul shook off the viper from his hand into the fire. We speak to men of our own kith and kin, we talk to you out of warm earnest hearts, but we can only say to you, "Do not trust in us, for you will be fools if you do. Do not trust in any man, for though you might make a sacrifice of your reason by so doing, yet remember that 'to obey is better than sacrifice.'" God demands of you not submission to your fellow

men, whoever they may be; He requires of you not to listen to the pealing of organs, not to attend gorgeous ceremonies where the smoke of incense goes up in gaudy palaces dedicated to His service; but He requires this, that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then He tells you that you shall live. Trust the Savior and you shall not perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand. But if you refuse this way of salvation, then there is none other presented to you, and you must perish in your sins.

"To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." And now I have to show that *it is so.* Men are always setting up these ways of salvation of their own, and they will run anywhere sooner than come to Christ and do as God tells them. Let me show how to obey is better than sacrifice, and how to hearken is better than the fat of rams.

It is better in itself. It shows that you are more *humble*. There are persons in the world who say that to trust Christ to save us from sin is not to be humble. Now, is it not always humility on the part of a child to do exactly what its parent tells it without asking any questions? I think it is so. Some poor Papists go down on their knees, and even lick the dust to do penance, and they think that this is being humble. Now, suppose one of your children has offended you, and you say to him, "Come, my Dear, I freely forgive you; come and give me a kiss, and it is all over." He shakes his head, and says, "No, Father, I cannot kiss you," and he runs upstairs and shuts himself up. You knock at the door, and say, "Come, my Child, come and kiss me, and it is all forgiven." But he shakes his head and says, "No, never!" He shuts himself up there all alone, and he thinks he is doing more to put away your anger by so doing than by obeying your command. You say to him solemnly, "My Child, I will chasten you again for disobedience if you do not come and accept the forgiveness which I offer to you if you will but kiss me." The child sullenly says, "No, Father, I will do something else that is more humbling," and then you feel in your soul that that is an unhumbled child or else he would at once do what his father told him, without thinking whether it would be a humiliating thing or not. It would be a humbling thing because his father told him to do it, and if he were a right-minded child he would do it from a spirit of obedience. Now, you may think it very humble on your part to need to feel a great deal of conviction, and to shed a great many tears, and to pray a great many prayers, but the most lowly thing you can do is to perform what the Master tells you. "Trust Me," He said, "do not go over there to weep; come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do not stand at the swine's trough saying, "I will not arise and go to my Father, for I am not fit to go till I have suffered a great deal more." Hear the voice which bids you say, "I will arise and go unto my Father, and what I have to say I will say unto Him, and if I have to weep I will weep with my head on His bosom, while I receive the kisses of His love." Come, poor Sinner, do not set up your proud humility in the teeth of God, but since He bids you look and live, oh, give up your prayers, and even your tears, and your

repentings, and your convictions—have done with them all as grounds of confidence, and look to Jesus Christ, and to Jesus Christ alone!

But in the next place, *it is really a more holy thing.* There are some soldiers here tonight. Now, suppose one of these received orders from the commanding officer to keep guard at such-and-such a door. All of a sudden he thinks to himself, "I am very fond of our commander, and I should like to do something for him." He puts his musket against the wall, and starts out to find a shop where he can buy a bunch of flowers. He is away from his post all the while, of course, and when he comes back he is discovered to have been away from the post of duty. He says, "Here is the bunch of flowers I went to get." But I hear his officer say, "To obey is better than that; we cannot allow you—military discipline would not permit it—to run off at every whim and wish of yours and neglect your duty, for who knows what mischief might follow?" The man, however much you might admire what he was doing, would certainly be made to learn by military law that "To obey is better than sacrifice." It is a holier and a better thing to do one's duty than to make duties for one's self and then set about them. Now, does it not seem a very pretty thing when a man puts on a very handsome-looking gown with a yellow cross down his back, and something else in pink, and I know not what colors, and ministers in a place decorated with flowers, and where there are such sweet things, incense smoking from silver censers and choristers all in white—is not that man serving God? When he preaches he does not say to the people, "Believe and live," but begins to talk about "the blessed sacrament of the altar," or some other such stuff? Is he not serving God when he does this? I will appeal to this old Book. Where inside these leaves and covers is there a word about burning this smoking incense? When did Christ ever say anything about it? Where have we anything about that decorated font, or about that pulpit that looks so very glorious? Why, the man has been making up a spiritual pantomime for himself, and he has left out altogether the soul of the matter. He has left out Christ, and therefore he has not done his work. He has done 20 other things, I dare say very sincerely, and with a very pure desire, but after all he needs to be made to learn the meaning of this passage, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," and better than smoking incense, and flowers, and gilded crosses, and chasubles, and albs, and dalmatics, and all such things as could possibly be brought together.

If he had God's Word for it, it would be right, but without God's Word it is a mere invention of man to which God can have no regard. It is a more holy thing to do what God bids you, than to do what you yourselves invent. When I have done with what I have invented, however pretty it may be, however venerable it may seem, yet what does it come to? Suppose I worship God in one of those smart robes, is my worship a bit the better? Suppose I should go home tonight and spend the night on my

knees, and think that by that means I should satisfy God? What should I have done but made my knees ache?

Supposing I had filled this place with incense—what should I have done but probably have made you cough? Suppose I had decorated myself and this place—some of you might have been pleased—but what connection on earth can there be between flowers and holiness, or between gilding and millinery and glorifying God? If our God were like some of the fabled deities of Greece and Rome, He might be delighted with these pretty things, but our God is in the heavens, and when He does show His splendor He scatters stars broadcast across the sky with both His hands, and what are all your prettinesses to Him? What is your swelling music and all your pretty things to Him who built the heavens and piled the earth with all its rugged splendor of forest, and mountain, and stream? "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

But while I remark upon these things, let me also say that to obey the precept, "Believe and live," is certainly a great deal more effectual to the soul's salvation than all the sacrifice, and all the fat of rams which you can offer. Let me give you a picture by way of illustration. Naaman was a leper. He desired healing. The Prophet said to him, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and you shall be clean." Now Naaman thought to himself, "I dare say; wash! Does he think me to be some filthy wretch who needs washing? He says I must wash seven times! Does he really think that I have not washed for so long that it will take seven washings to get me clean? He says I must wash! What a simple thing! I have washed every day, and it has done me no good. He says I must wash in Jordan! Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Jordan? Why cannot I wash in them and be clean?" This is just what some of you say about believing. You say, "Well, but sacraments, there must be something in them! Believing in Christ—why it is such a simple thing! I am such a respectable person. This is a very good religion to preach to thieves and so on, but surely you forget that I have a great many good works of my own; cannot I think of them? You say I must trust in Christ as though you thought nothing of my good works." Well, you are near the mark, Sir. I do not think anything of them; I would not give a penny for a wagonload of them. The whole of them are just what Paul calls them—"refuse." He says, "I count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in Him." All your best works are but so much rubbish to be carted out of the way, and if you trust in them they will be your ruin, and all we say to you is, "BELIEVE AND LIVE."

Now Naaman was in a great rage, and he went away, but his servant said to him, "My Father, if the Prophet had bid you do some great thing would you not have done it? Much rather, then, will you not do what he tells you when he says, Wash and he clean?" Now, if my Master were to say to you tonight, "Walk to the city of York barefoot and you shall be saved," if you believed it, the most of you would start off tonight; but

when the message is, "Believe and live," oh, that is too simple! What? Just trust Christ and be saved on the spot? Why, it cannot be, you think. If we bade you do some great thing you would do it, but you refuse to do so simple a thing as to believe. But if Naaman had gone to Abana and Pharpar he would not have been healed, and if he had sought out all the physicians in Syria and paid away all his money, he would still have been white with leprosy. There was nothing but washing in Jordan that would heal him. And so with you, Sinner, you may go and do 50,000 things, but you will never get your sins forgiven, and you never, never shall have a hope of Heaven unless you will obey this one precept—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," but if you do this you shall find that "to obey is better than sacrifice" indeed, and "to hearken" than all "the fat of rams."

But now we must close with a remark which we have made over and over again during this discourse, namely, that by *not obeying and not hearkening to the Gospel, Sinner, you must perish.* I know that some think it rather hard that there should be nothing for them but ruin if they will not believe in Jesus Christ, but if you will think for a minute you will see that it is just and reasonable. I suppose there is no way for a man to keep his strength up except by eating. If you were to say, "I shall never eat, I will not take refreshment," you might go to Madeira, or travel to all the climates, (supposing you lived long enough!) but you would most certainly find that no climate and no exercise would avail to keep you alive if you refused to eat; and would you then say, "Well, it is a hard thing that I should die because I refused to eat"? It is not an unjust thing that if you are such a fool as not to eat, you must die. It is precisely so with believing. "Believe, and you are saved." If you will not believe, it is no hard thing that you should be damned! It would be harder if it were not to be the case. There is a man who is thirsty, and there stands before him a fountain. "No," he says, "I will never touch a drop of moisture as long as I live; cannot I get my thirst quenched in some other way?" We tell him, no; he must drink or die. He says, "I will never drink, but it is a hard thing that I must therefore die, a very hard thing." No, it is not, poor Simpleton! It is nothing but an inevitable law of Nature; you must drink or die. Why play the fool at such a cost as that? Drink, Man, drink! And so with Christ. There is the way of salvation, and you must trust Christ or perish; and there is nothing hard in it that you should perish if you do not.

Here is a man out at sea. He has a chart, and that chart, if well studied, will, with the help of the compass, guide him to his journey's end. The polestar gleams out amidst the clouds, and that, too, will help him. "No," he says, "I will have nothing to do with your stars; I do not believe in the North Pole; I shall not attend to that little thing inside the box; one needle is as good as another needle; I do not believe in your rubbish, and I will have nothing to do with it. It is only a lot of nonsense got up by people on purpose to make money, and I will have nothing to

do with it." The man does not get to shore anywhere; he drifts about, but never reaches port, and he says it is a very hard thing, a very hard thing. I do not think so. Some of you say, "Well, I am not going to read your Bible; I am not going to listen to your talk about Jesus Christ; I do not believe in such things." You will be damned, then, Sir! "That's very hard," you say. No, it is not. It is not more so than the fact that if you reject the compass and the polestar you will not get to your journey's end. There is no help for it; it must be so; you say you will have nothing to do with these things, and you pooh-pooh them. You will find it a very hard thing to laugh these matters down when you come to die, when the cold, clammy sweat must be wiped from your brow, and your heart beats against your ribs as if it wanted to get out and get away to God. Oh Soul, you will find then, that these Sundays, and these services, and this preaching, and this old Book are something more and better than you thought they were, and you will wonder that you were so simple as to neglect them, the only guides to salvation; and above all, that you neglected Christ, that Polestar which alone shines aloft to guide the mariner to the Port of Peace.

Now, where do you live tonight? You live, perhaps, on the other side of London Bridge, and you have to get over there tonight as you go home; but while you have been sitting here, you have got a fancy into your head that you do not believe in bridges, and you do not believe in boats, and you do not believe in water. You say, "I am not going over any of your bridges; do not tell me; I shall not get into any of your boats; if there is a river, I am not going over it; I do not believe in crossing rivers." You go along and you come to the bridge, but you will not cross it; there is a boat, but you will not get into it; there is the river, and you say you will not cross that anyway, and yet you think it is very hard that you cannot get home. Now, I think you must have got something that has over-balanced your reasoning powers, for you would not think it so hard if you were in your senses. If a man will not do the thing that is necessary to a certain end, I do not see how he can expect to gain that end. You have taken poison, and the physician brings an antidote, and says, "Take it quickly, or you will die; but if you take it quickly, I will guarantee that the poison will be neutralized." But you say, "No, Doctor, I do not believe it; let everything take its course—let every tub stand on its own bottom—I will have nothing to do with you, Doctor." "Well, Sir, you will die, and when the coroner's inquest is held on your body, the verdict will be, 'Served him right!'" So will it be with you if, having heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you say, "Oh, pooh-pooh! I am too much of a commonsense man to have anything to do with that, and I shall not attend to it." Then, when you perish, the verdict given by your conscience will be a verdict of *"Felode-se"*—"he destroyed himself." So says the old Book—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself!"

But when I quote that text I must not stop there, for the next line is, "but in Me is your help found." Oh, my dear Hearer, what a mercy it is

that there is help in God! There is help in God for you! There is help in God for the worst of you. I cannot tell who there may be here tonight. There may be some who have sinned very greatly, but there is help laid upon One who is "mighty to save." Where are you, big Sinner? Here is a great Savior able to put all your sins away. Have you grown gray in wickedness? Ah, my Master can put away 70 years of sin by a moment's application of His precious blood. See Him bleeding on the Cross in agonies so great, that angels might have wept to gaze upon Him.—

"See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down?
Did ever such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

There must be merit in such mighty agonies. If you trust in the merits of that precious blood, you shall one day be with Him in Paradise. God give you Divine Grace to trust Jesus, to trust Jesus now, and then we shall meet again where they sing, "Unto Him Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, be Glory forever and ever. Amen."

"Behold the Lamb of God!
Behold, believe and live;
Behold His all-atoning blood,
And life receive.
Look from yourself to Him,
Behold Him on the tree!
Though the eye of faith is dim
He looks on thee.
That meek, that languid eye,
Turns from Himself away,
Invites the trembling sinner near,
And bids him stay.
Stay with Him near the tree.
Stay with Him near the tomb.
Stay till the risen Lord you see,
Stay 'till He comes.'"

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MESSENGERS WANTED
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DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 22, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

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

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

There is at the present moment great lack of men to tell out the story of the Cross of Jesus Christ, and many considerations press that lack upon our hearts. Think how many voices all mingle into this one—"Who will go for Us?" Listen to the wounds of Jesus as they plaintively cry, "How shall we be rewarded? How shall the precious drops of blood be made available to redeem the souls of men unless loving lips shall go for us to claim by right those who have been redeemed by blood?" The blood Jesus cries like Abel's blood from the ground, "Whom shall I send?" and His wounds repeat the question, "Who will go for Us?" Does not the purpose of the Eternal Father also join with solemn voice in this demand? The Lord has decreed a multitude unto Eternal Life. He has purposed, with a Purpose which cannot be changed or frustrated, that a multitude whom no man can number shall be the reward of the Savior's

Sacrifice; but how can these decrees be fulfilled except by the sending forth of the Gospel, for it is through the Gospel, and through the Gospel alone, that salvation can come to the sons of men. I think I hear the awful voice of the Purpose mingling with the piercing cry of the Cross appealing to us to declare the Word of Life. I see the handwriting of Old Eternity bound in one volume with the crimson writing of Calvary, and both together write out most legibly the pressing question—"Who shall go for Us to bring home the Elect and redeemed ones?

The very sins of men, horrible as they are to think upon, may be made an argument for proclaiming the Gospel. Oh the cruel and ravenous sins which destroy the sons of men, and tear their choicest joy in pieces! When I see monstrous lusts defiling the Temple of God, and many gods and many lords usurping the Throne of the Almighty, I can hear the loud cry, "Who will go for Us?" Do not perishing souls suggest to us the question of the text? Men are going down to the grave perishing for lack of knowledge, the tomb engulfs them, eternity swallows them up, and in the dark they die without a glimmer of hope. No candle of the Lord ever shines upon their faces; by these perishing souls we implore you this morning to feel that heralds of the Cross are needed—needed lest these souls be ruined everlastingly! Needed that they may be lifted up from the dunghill of their corruption, and made to sit among princes redeemed by Christ Jesus. The cry swells into a wail of mighty pathetic pleading; all time echoes it, and all eternity prolongs it; while Heaven, Earth, and Hell give weight to the chorus.

Beloved, there are two forms of missionary enterprise conducted by two classes of agents. I so divide them merely for the occasion, they are really not divided by any rigid boundary. The first is the agency of those specially dedicated to the ministry of the Word, who give themselves wholly to it, who are able, by the generous effort of the Christian Church, or by their own means, to set their whole time apart for the great work of teaching the Truth of God. As there are but few in this assembly who can do this, I shall not translate my text in its reference to ministers, although it has a loud voice to such, but I shall rather refer to another and equally useful form of agency, namely, the Christian Church as a whole—the Believers who, while following their secular avocations, are heralds for Christ and missionaries for the Cross. Such are needed here, such are wanted in our colonies, such might find ample room in the great world of heathendom, men and women, who, if they did not stand up beneath the tree to address the assembled throng, would preach in the workshop; who, if they did not teach the hundreds, would at the fireside instruct the twos and threes. We want both sorts of laborers, but

I may do more good on this present occasion by stirring up this second sort; for though all of you cannot become preachers, for if all were, and talked at random as the Plymouthites, the church would become a mere vacuum, a huge gaping void.

You may all be teachers of Christ in another sense, you can all give yourself to the work of God in your own calling, and promote your Master's Glory perseveringly in your daily avocations. I lift up an earnest cry in God's name for consecrated men and women, who, not needing to wait till the Church's hands can support them, shall support themselves with their own hands, and yet minister for Christ Jesus wherever Providence may have cast their lot. Coming at once to the text, we shall first of all have a little to say concerning *the person needed;* secondly, about *the persons offering themselves;* and thirdly, upon *the work which they will be called to do.*

I. THE PERSON WANTED, as describe in the questions, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?"

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

Let us look, then, at this two-sided person. He is *divinely chosen*—"Whom shall *I* send?" As if in the Eternal Counsels this had once been a question, "Who shall be the chosen man, who shall be the object of My Eternal Love, and in consequence shall have this Grace given him that he should tell others of the unsearchable riches of Christ?" Beloved, what a mercy it is to us who are Believers that *to* us this is no more a question; for Sovereignty has pitched upon us and Eternal Mercy, not for anything good in us, but simply because God would have it so, has selected us that we may bring forth fruit unto His name. As we hear the question, let us listen to the Savior's exposition of it. "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." It is from the fountain of Election that all mercies spring. The workers for the living God are a people chosen by the Most High. He sends whom He wills. He makes choice of this man and not another, and in every case exercises His own Sovereign Will. He gives no account of His matters, but answers once and for all to every carping criticism, "May I not do as I will with My own?"

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

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

for Us?" Every faithful Christian laborer labors for God. Brothers, when we tell others the story of the Cross, we speak of *God the Father*. It is through our lips that the prodigal son must be reminded that the hired servants have bread enough and to spare. It may be through us that he will be shown his rags and his disgrace; through us he will discover more clearly the disgrace of feeding swine. The Spirit of God is the efficient Agent, but it is by us that He may work. It is by us that the Divine Father falls upon the neck of His prodigal child. *He* does it, but it is through the teaching of His Word in some form or other. The promises are spoken by our lips, the sweet invitations are delivered by our tongues. We, as though God did beseech them by us, are to pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. God the Father says to you, my dear Hearers, who know and love Him, "Will you go for Me and be an ambassador for Me?"

Nor must we forget our tender *Redeemer*. He is not here, for He is risen. He will come again, but meanwhile He asks for someone to speak for Him, someone to tell Jerusalem that her iniquity is forgiven; to tell His murderers that He prays for them, "Father, forgive them," to assure the blood-bought that they are redeemed; to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them who are bound. From His Throne of Glory Jesus says, "Who will go for Me and be a speaker for Me?" Moreover, that blessed *Spirit*, under whose dispensational power we live at the present hour, has no voice to speak to the sons of men audibly except by His people; and though He works invisibly and mysteriously in the saints, yet He chooses loving hearts, and compassionate lips, and tearful eyes to be the means of benediction. The Spirit descends like the cloven tongue, but He sits upon disciples—there is no resting place for the Spirit of God nowadays within walls, and even the Heaven of heavens contains Him not, but He enthrones Himself within His people. He makes us God-bearers, and He speaks through us as through a trumpet to the sons of men. So you see that the adorable Trinity cry to you, you blood-bought, blood-redeemed sons of God, and says, "Are you seeking to promote Our Glory? Are you effecting Our Purposes? Are you winning those purchased by Our Eternal Sacrifice?" Turning to the Church assembled, the Lord pronounces those ancient questions, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?"

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

The person offering himself is described in the Chapter at very great length—he must be an Isaiah. Being an Isaiah, he must, in the first place, *have felt his own unworthiness.* My Brother, my Sister, if you are to be made useful by God in soul-winning, you must pass through the

experience which Isaiah describes in the Chapter before us. You must have cried in bitterness of spirit, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips!" God will never fill you with Himself until He has emptied you of your own self. Till you feel that you are weak as water, you shall not see the splendor of the Divine Power. May I ask, then, those of you who feel desirous to serve God, this experimental question, "Have you been made fully conscious of your own utter unfitness to be employed in any work for God, and your own complete unworthiness of so great an honor as to become a servant of the Living God? If you have not been brought to this, you must begin with yourself; you cannot do any good to others—you must be born-again, and one of the best evidences of your being born-again will be a discovery of your own natural depravity and impurity in the sight of God.

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

The source of Isaiah's sense of nothingness was that Isaiah *saw the Glory of Christ.* My dear Friends, have you ever sat down and gazed upon the Cross till, having read your own pardon there, you have seen that Cross rising higher and higher till it touched the heavens and overshadowed the globe? Then you have seen and felt the Glory of Him

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

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

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

The next preparation for Christian work is, we must possess *a sense of mercy*. Then flew one of the seraphims and took a live coal from off the altar. We explained in our reading that the altar is for sacrifice, and that the lips must be touched with a coal of that sacrifice. Then, being so touched, they derive two effects. In the first place, *the lips are purged of*

iniquity; and in the next place, *they feel the influence of fire,* enabling them to speak with vehemence and force. Beloved Hearer, you say, perhaps in zeal, "I desire to serve Christ and to tell abroad the story of His Cross." Have you proved that story to be true? Were you ever washed in the Fountain? How can you bid others come if you have never come yourself? Have your sins been put away? "I hope so." Do you know it? I question if you can preach with any power till you have a full assurance of your own salvation. To teach the Gospel with "but" and "if" is a poor teaching. You Sunday school teachers cannot hope to do much good to others while you doubt your own acceptance in the Beloved. You must know that you are saved. Oh Beloved, you must feel the touch of that live coal; you must feel that Christ gave Himself for you. You Little-Faiths may get to Heaven, but you must keep in the back rank while here, we cannot put you in the front of the battle. Though God may make you of service, we cannot expect you to be eminently of service. The man who would serve God must know himself to be saved. The effect of that live coal will be to fire the lips with heavenly flame. "Oh," says one man, "a flaming coal will burn the lips so that the man cannot speak at all." That is just how God works with us; it is by consuming the fleshly power that He inspires the heavenly might. Oh let the lips be burnt, let the fleshly power of eloquence be destroyed, but oh for that live coal to make the tongue eloquent with Heaven's flame; the true Divine Power which urged the Apostles forward and made them conquerors of the whole world.

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

You will observe that the person who thus volunteered for sacred service gave himself *unreservedly.* He did not say, "Here am I, use me where I am," but "send me." Where? No condition as to place is so much as hinted at. Anywhere, anywhere, anywhere—send me. Some people are militia-Christians—they serve the King with a limitation, and must not be sent out of England; but others are soldier-Christians who give

themselves wholly up to their Lord and Captain; they will go wherever He chooses to send them. Oh come, my Master, and be absolute Lord of my soul! Reign over me and subdue my every passion to do and be, and feel all that Your will ordains. Blessed prayer! May we never be content till we get all that is to be gotten by way of joyful experience and holy power, nor until we yield all that is to be yielded by mortal man to the God whose Sovereign Right to us we claim.

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

III. In the last place, and very briefly, THE WORK WHICH SUCH PERSONS WILL BE CALLED TO UNDERTAKE. Isaiah's history is a picture of what many and many a true Christian laborer may expect. Isaiah was sent to preach very unpleasant Truth, but like a true hero he was very bold in preaching it. "Isaiah is very bold," says the Apostle. Now if you are called of God either to preach or teach, or whatever it is, remember the things you have to preach or teach will not be agreeable to your hearers. Scorn on the man who ever desires to make the Truth of God palatable to unhallowed minds. If he modulates his utterances or suppresses the Truth which God has given him even in the slightest possible degree to suit the tastes of men, he is a traitor and a coward—let him be drummed out of God's regiment, and driven from the army of God altogether. God's servants are to receive God's message, and whether men will hear or whether they will not, they are to deliver it to them in the spirit of old Micaiah, who vowed, "As the Lord my God lives, whatever

the Lord said to me, that will I speak." But this is not the hardest task; the most severe labor is this—we may have to deliver unpleasant Truth to people who are resolved not to receive it, to people who will derive no profit from it, but rather will turn it to their own destruction. You see in the text that ancient Israel was to hear but not to receive; they were to be preached to, and the only result was to be that their heart was to be made fat, and their ears dull of hearing. What? Is that ever to be the effect of the Gospel? The Bible tells us so. Our preaching is a savor of death unto death, as well as of life unto life. "Oh," says one, "I should not like to preach if that is the case." But remember, Brother, that the preaching of the Cross is a sweet savor of Christ either way. The highest object of all to a Christian laborer is not to win souls, that is *a* great objective; but *the* great objective is to glorify God; and many a man has been successful in this who did not succeed in the other. If Israel is not gathered, still, if we bear our testimony for God, our work is done.

No farmer thinks of paying his men in proportion to the harvest. He pays his workers for work done, and so will it be with us, by God's Grace, and if I happen to be a very successful laborer here, I boast not, nor claim any large reward on that account. I believe that had I preached the Gospel with earnestness and waited upon God, and if He had denied me conversions, my reward would be as great at the last, in some respects, because the Master would not lay to my door a failure which could not be attributed to myself.

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

pleasant duty." Anybody will go then; but if you are willing to serve God at all, you will say today, "Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads, I will, by the Holy Spirit's aid, be true to my following."

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

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

We need much help. Remember it is for Home Missions as well as Foreign Missions, so that it deserves to have a double portion.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 6.

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SWEET SAVOR
NO. 688

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 29, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will accept you with your sweet savor."
Ezekiel 20:41.

GOD does not cease to observe the sins of His people. As the eyes of Moses never waxed dim, so the eyes of God do not grow dim with regard to the sins of His chosen. We may learn this from the recapitulation of those offenses which we find in the Chapter before us and in many other places in Scripture. He looks down from Heaven and beholds their wanderings, the hardness of their hearts, the stubbornness of their will, their daily and continual violations of His statutes and commands. Mercy has some other source than that of laxness in the memory of God. He knows the sins of man, and He hates the sins of His people just as much as the sins of other men. No, if there are sins which are worse in God's estimation than others, they are the sins of His own Elect. But, notwithstanding this severe strictness, and although God must have a much clearer view of the evil of sin than any of us ever can, He freely pardons those whom He reserves. He casts their sins behind His back, and remembers not their iniquity. He blots out their transgression like a cloud, and their iniquities like a thick cloud. He has a time to chasten, but He has also a set time to bless. He afflicts, but He does not afflict from the heart; and when He turns in a way of Grace to His people, He then seems to be flying on the wings of the wind, for He comes with all His soul, most heartily and richly to display His favor and His love toward the objects of His choice.

One would have thought that the persons described in this Chapter never would have been acceptable to God. They had so thoroughly defiled themselves, and after so many trials had been so desperately incorrigible, that one would have supposed the Chapter would have concluded with thunderbolts of vengeance, and a terrible voice condemning them to be driven forever from the face of the Most High. Instead of this it concludes with mercy. The trumpet ceases its loud swell, and the melodious tone of the harp is heard in gentle notes of melody; the thunder and the lightning are over, the storm is past, and the still small voice, in refreshing calm, proclaims the Infinite Pardon that proceeds from a tender Father's heart.

Our text seems to me very full of fatness. Its savor will be doubtless passing sweet to those who have Divine Grace to appreciate it. We shall contemplate it in two lights; first, we have a promise that *the persons of His people shall be accepted with savor*. Sinners are accepted through the merits of Christ: "I will accept you with your sweet savor." I cannot accept you otherwise, but I will accept you thus. Then, secondly (which is more consistent with the context), *we are assured that our offerings shall be accepted;* "I will accept you with your sweet savor." I will not only love and receive you, but I will also receive your worship and your service.

Your sweet savor, those same things which once you offered to idols, you shall from now on bring as an offering to Me, and when I have accepted you and you are reconciled to Me, then I will accept your good works, and your prayers, and your praises, too.

I. First of all, as being the fundamental evidence of Divine Grace, THE LORD ACCEPTS THE PERSONS OF HIS PEOPLE THROUGH THE SWEET SAVOR OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The merits of our great Redeemer are sweet savor in the nostrils of the Most High. Whether we speak of the active or passive Righteousness of Christ, there is alike an overpowering fragrance. Such was the merit of His active life by which He honored the Law of God, and exemplified every precept like a precious jewel in the pure setting of His own Humanity. Such, too, the merit of His passive obedience, as He endured with unmurmuring submission hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, and with the ever-deepening stream of sorrow, at length yielded to that unknown agony when He sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane, when He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them who plucked out His hair, stretched His hands to the nails, and was fastened to the cruel wood that He might suffer the wrath of God on our behalf. These two things are sweet before the Most High, and for the sake of His doing and His dying, His substitutionary sufferings and His vicarious obedience, the Lord God of Infinite Justice accepts us with the sweet savor of Christ.

There are many sweet savors mentioned in the Old Testament, one of the first is the sacrifice of Noah where the word is used which is implied here. As soon as Noah came out of the Ark he offered up clean beasts, and it is said, "the Lord God smelled a sweet savor of rest." That is the very word here—a sweet savor or a savor of rest. And Noah obtained a Covenant made with him and with all creatures on the face of the earth, that a flood should no more destroy the earth, that Covenant being given partly as the result of the sweet savor of rest. In like manner there is a Covenant made with the chosen seed through our Lord Jesus Christ who is unto us a sweet savor of rest because God delights in Him as our blessed Substitute and Representative.

But I prefer to confine your attention this morning to one figure peculiarly instructive. These words, "sweet savor," appear to me to contain an allusion to the incense which was commonly offered in religious worship, and particularly to the incense which was used in the Jewish Tabernacle, of which you will find a description in the 30th Chapter of the Book of Exodus. In order that the sweet merits of the Lord Jesus may be the more fragrant to your understanding, I ask you to turn to that Chapter and let me refer you to some points in which the holy incense brings out clearly before our eyes the qualities and excellencies of the merits of Christ. You will read at the 34th verse—*"And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto you sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight: And you shall make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy: And you shall beat some of it very small, and put of it before the Testimony in the Tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with you: it shall be unto you most holy. And as for the perfume, which you shall make, you shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof; it shall be*

unto you holy for the Lord. Whoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people."

Now you observe that this incense was sweet unto God; so, too, are the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, as a Spirit infinitely and exclusively holy, delights in holiness: as a truthful Spirit He cannot be satisfied with anything that is untruthful: as a most just, and yet loving Being, He finds in the Person of Jesus Christ an expiation which was in every way honorable to Justice, and a revelation of Grace according to the goodwill of Divine Love which is precious to Himself beyond all expression, and admirable to all holy creatures far beyond all blessing and praise. Whenever the Great God contemplates His own dear Son, He feels an intense delight in surveying His Character, and in beholding His sufferings. You and I, so far as we have been taught of God, must find infinite and unspeakable delight in the Person and work of Christ; but, alas, we are like common people who look upon a fine picture without a cultivated understanding in the art of painting—we cannot perceive the whole beauty—we do not know the richness of its coloring, and the wondrous skill of all its touches. Who but Jehovah understands holiness? Who like God knows what great love means? Or who save the Lord can comprehend justice and truth to perfection? Therefore it is that as He gazes upon that matchless masterpiece of Love and Justice, of Truth and Holiness, embodied in the Person of His dear Son, He finds that infinite satisfaction which our faith is perpetually struggling by small degrees to realize.

There is no doubt a discipline by which every faculty may be educated. If I may use so homely an idea, the nostril of one man may be refreshed with a coarse perfume which would disgust another man of finer taste. The educated nostril may be able to discern between this and that savor till it is only to be gratified with something exceedingly refined and delicate.

Adhering to the metaphor of the text, the Lord our God is so Holy, and Just, and True that the coarser virtues of mankind, the best of all that we can bring, might disgust Him. But when He looks upon His dear Son, there is such a rarity of sweetness in the sacred confection of His blessed Character that He takes delight in it, and the savor is sweet unto Him. We love Him, we delight in Him when we think of His Character. In our inmost souls we feel that there is nothing we could find fault with, but everything to admire and adore. But the most holy God finds even greater satisfaction; and the merits of the Savior are so sweet a savor to Him that we strive in vain to reach the knowledge of it. The sweetness of the incense in the Temple was meant to set this forth. The incense, however, was not the result of one sweet drug, but of several mixed together. We have four mentioned. The Talmud says there were eleven—we do not know whether there were or were not; we are content to believe, as the Scripture tells us, that there were four. Many ingredients, then, are mixed and mingled together to make up the one surpassing sweetness of this incomparable perfume. And, Brothers and Sisters, it is certainly so in Christ Jesus. If we take the characters of other men, however excellent they may be, they only excel in some one, or possibly some two points. But when you contemplate the Savior, you find all the virtues enshrined in Him. Other men are stars, but He is a constellation, no, He is the whole universe of stars gathered into one galaxy of

splendor; other men are gems and jewels, but He is the crown imperial, where every jewel glitters; other men finish but a part of the picture, and the background is left; or else there is something in the foreground that is but roughly touched; but He finishes the whole, not the minutest portion is neglected; His Character is perfect and matchless.

If I look at Peter, I admire his courage; if I look at Paul, I am amazed at his industry and devotedness to the cause of God; if I look at John, I see the loveliness and gentleness of his bearing; but when I look to the Savior, I am not so much attracted by any one particular virtue as by the singular combination of the whole. There are all the spices—the stacte, and the onycha, and the galbanum, and the pure frankincense—the varied perfumes combine to make up one perfect confection. But still more remarkable is the perfect balance of the Savior's Character as typified to us in the exact proportions of these spices. You observe they are to be of equal weight. If you look, there is not to be so much stacte, and then but half as much of galbanum, but each one in its fair proportion—they are to be of equal weight. So is it in Christ. It is difficult to get a fully-balanced character. You can see in some men indomitable energy, but you cannot see at the same time any delicate tenderness. You will see in another an exceeding tenderness which degenerates into effeminacy, through want of some sternness to modify it. Who among you would wish to imitate Elijah? He is sterling in his integrity, a noble specimen of humanity, but the gentleness which should temper his fiery courage is so far lacking that much as you admire him you cannot love him. Even Moses—though I may venture to say that among those who are born of women there has never been a greater, never been one beside himself who could have his name ennobled in the same song with our great Prophet—the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb—yet, as you look at Moses, beautifully balanced as his character is in most respects, that condescending loveliness which glistens in the Savior you cannot detect about the glory even of the Hebrew Lawgiver.

Brothers and Sisters, the Savior's Character has all goodness in all perfection; He is full of Divine Grace and the Truth of God. Some men, nowadays, talk of Him as if He were simply incarnate benevolence. It is not so. No lips ever spoke with such thundering indignation against sin as the lips of the Messiah. "He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor." While in tenderness He prays for His tempted disciple, that his faith may not fail, yet with awful sternness He winnows the heap, and drives away the chaff into unquenchable fire. We speak of Christ as being meek and lowly in spirit, and so He was. A bruised reed He did not break, and the smoking flax He did not quench; but His meekness was balanced by His courage, and by the boldness with which He denounced hypocrisy. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; you fools and blind, you serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of Hell?" These are not the words of the milksop some authors represent Christ to have been. He is a Man—a thorough Man throughout—a God-like Man—gentle as a woman, but yet stern as a warrior in the midst of the day of battle. The Character is balanced; as much of one virtue as of another. As in Deity every attribute is full orbed; Justice never eclipses Mercy, nor Mercy Justice, nor Justice Faithfulness; so in the Character of Christ you have all the excellent things, "whatever things are lovely,

whatever things are true, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are of good report," you have them all. But not one of them casts a shadow on another; they shine each and all with undimmed splendor.

Turning to the incense again, I shall want you to notice that all the ingredients of this incense were of the very finest kind—*pure* frankincense. And then again in the 35th verse, *"pure and holy."* And then the 36th verse—*"most holy."* So all the virtues of Christ were the best forms of virtue. His Love was not love in word but in deed. His Faithfulness was not the faithfulness of cynicism, which criticizes and finds fault—it was the faithfulness of a friend who loves at all times. Select any one trait in the Redeemer's Character, I mind not which it is, you shall find that in that respect He will surpass the greatest master of that virtue, be he whomever he may. Take His faith in God—I do not think we sufficiently admire the Faith of Christ—that Faith never wavers even in the time of His strong crying and tears. As David so richly describes it, He still trusts in God, rests on Him—appropriates the Divine name, "My God, My God," and which adoration exclaims, "You are holy, O You who inhabits the praises of Israel." Oh that mighty Faith of His! You shall take Abraham's faith and put it side by side with the Faith of Jesus, and you find the Patriarch failing here and there, though he was the father of the faithful; but the Faith of Jesus was steadfast and immoveable. Did it seem to stagger once when He said, "O My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from Me"? Oh, it never failed! His steadfastness was never more illustrious than when He thus spoke, "Nevertheless not as I will but as You will." Or, again, "Your will be done." Was not that faith exercised in purest submission? Take any other of the virtues (I have not time to do so this morning, nor is it necessary that I should, but), wherever you fasten your meditations, you shall see Christ excels there—His gold is the gold of Ophir; His jewels are of the first water; His wheat is the finest of the wheat—the fat of kidneys. And when He lays Himself upon the Altar, it is not as the lean bullock which of old Israel would bring to God, but as the fatted one offered with the whole strength and perfection of every part of Him unto the Most High! Every component part, then, of the incense was pure, and so was every part of the merit of Christ.

You will not fail, also, to observe that there is no stint as to quantity. In some other parts of the Temple service quantities are given, as, for instance, in the 23rd and the following verses of this Chapter, you have the quantities of each ingredient for making the anointing oil, yet here you have no quantities whatever for the incense. The anointing oil had 500 shekels worth of one principal spice, and 250 shekels worth of another; but this is to be made without limit, as if to indicate that the merits of Jesus Christ know no bounds whatever. Oh, when that sacred box of precious ointment was broken on the Cross, who knows how far the merit of it extended? It perfumed the earth to its utmost bound, so that God has had patience with it. It acted as a salt to all Creation so that it might not be destroyed, and the sweet perfume went up to Heaven. The angels knew it and returned their harps, and God perceived it, and with a kind smile looked upon the human race—

"Oh 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."

There is no end to the merit of Jesus! You lost Sinners, you need not think that it cannot avail for you. However great your sin, its ill savor can all be quenched through the sweet savor of His perfect merit; and though your sins should be so many and so numerous that it should seem impossible but that the swift witnesses as avengers of blood should follow you up with their clamors, yet God regards more His Son than He does the sin of man, and has an eye to the merit of the Savior as well as to the demerit of the sinner. The first is greater than the second, so that He passes by transgression, iniquity, and sin, and remembers not the transgression of His people because His Mercy in Christ Jesus endures forever. It is without stint or quantity.

I hope I shall not weary you, but this seems to me to be a rich vein. I would observe, that all through this incense is spoken of as being peculiarly holy, most holy unto God. The entire dedication of Christ's life and death to God is most remarkable. You can never see a divided aim about the Savior's action. When but a child, He said, "Know you not that I must be about My *Father's* business?" To the very last He was still consumed with the zeal of His Father's house. He never had a thought of fame. It is really amazing how little Jesus Christ seemed to notice what people thought of Him. There used to be an idea that Christ did a great many things to prevent people from forming such-and-such erroneous impressions of Him. For instance, it was supposed that He was anxious, after His Resurrection, to make it clear that He was Himself, and that He was not an impostor. I do not think such a motive ever entered into His mind. He was so simple and child-like, that He acted out His whole Self, not perpetually guarding against misconstruction, nor restricting Himself because of the adversary. His Character was too transparent, and His actions were too unvarnished to admit of His continually locking up that loophole, or stopping up that gap. Not He! His life was clear, without a spot of defilement; His whole soul drifted right on to this one thing—the Glory of God through the salvation of man.

He was not deluded for a moment by the golden apples that were cast in His pathway. They would have made Him a king, but He was a King too great to stoop to an earthly crown. As temptation could not attract Him, so neither could trials and difficulties restrain Him. Like an arrow from a bow that has been drawn by a strong archer, He sped right onward to the great goal of His Existence—the accomplishment of the work that God had given Him to do. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it is accomplished!" He set His face to go up to Jerusalem; He never turned His face away until He could look up to Heaven and say, "It is finished!" and then He gave up the ghost. Christ's merits are most holy, purely offered unto God; no selfishness, no worldliness—but everything Divine.

This incense, although little is said of it, was, of course, compounded when the ingredients were all brought together. It had to be compounded with great care, according to the art of the confectioner. Now, there certainly is great art and wondrous skill in the composition of the Savior's life. Why there is wondrous skill about the record of it, for those who have denied the authenticity of the Evangelists ought to accept a challenge which has often been put to them. Are there four narrations

written, would somebody who believes these to be forgeries kindly forge a fifth? Would somebody be pleased to write another which, though as much a forgery as any of the other four, should be consistent and have something new to recommend it? I would even venture to say if somebody attempted to make one new miracle, or write the fabulous record, they would find it as impossible to write a miracle on paper as to work the miracle; for there are some traits and points about the miracles of the Savior which betoken their genuineness, since to describe or imagine them were not possible. We could easily prove our point if this were the time, but it is not necessary. There is a matchless beginning in the life of the Savior and a matchless ending; in what is not done there is as much that is characteristic about Christ as in what is done. If you have ever read those spurious gospels which profess to contain the early life of the Savior, the Protevangeleon, you will see that this absurd, ridiculous, preposterous composition never could be harmonized with the life of the Savior. What is not there even in the record is as wonderful, I say, as what is there; the whole life is a compound of the confectioner.

But it seems that when compounded it had to be all bruised and broken. "You shall beat some of it small," says our version. Look at that "some of it." How did it get there? "You shall beat of it." Not "some of it," but "all of it." "You shall beat of it small, very fine." Now, certainly the whole life of the Savior was a process of bruising Him very fine. He begins with grief, He concludes with agony. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests," but He has not where to lay His head; and at last He has not a rag to cover Him, but hangs naked to His shame upon the Cross. His very grave is borrowed, just as was the manger in which He lay as an Infant. Altogether the whole sweetness of the life of Christ is brought out by the exquisite griefs which He is made to suffer. I question whether anybody knows anything about the sweetness of Christian Grace till he has been tried. We are told that when the ships are floating near Ceylon they can smell the perfume of the cinnamon groves—

"What though the spicy breezes
Blow softly on Ceylon's isle."

But navigators tell us that the perfumes are only smelt in poetry, that you never smell them there; that in fact cinnamon does not smell, and that we might wander through all those groves without knowing that they were odoriferous. But take the cinnamon, and begin to grind it, begin to pound it, above all begin to burn it, then it is that you get the sweetness. And the good man's goodness is not known so much in his days of happiness and pleasure as in his times of sorrow and of grief. We must be put into the mortar, we must feel the weight of the pestle to get the sweetness from it. And the Savior's whole life was just that pounding beneath the heavy hammer of human wrath, and at last of Divine Anger against sin—and then the sweetness came forth. But this incense was most sweet to God when it came to the burning. It was put upon the altar amidst the hot coals, and then the sweet perfume went up. So, Beloved, the very preciousness of Christ in its most extreme and best degree is to be seen when He is put upon the hot coals in Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha. However, I need not tell you the tale over again. You loving hearts have learned it well; you tender souls have wept all along the Via Dolorosa up to the Cross, and through the hours of grief

and suffering. You know what a sweet savor that must have been when the thrice holy Savior offered Himself as a holocaust to God that He might put away the ill savor of human guilt.

Thus I have run through the whole. You will observe I do not stop to say a word about the four ingredients. It is very easy to spiritualize, and more especially the most difficult passages, because then you can say any nonsense you like. I have, however, omitted to do so. I do not really think there is anything to be said about them except just this—the stacte appears to have been a form of myrrh which dropped from the myrrh tree without cutting, and therefore was highly esteemed. The voluntary sufferings of Christ, in that He gave Himself and laid down His life—no man taking it from Him—does certainly render His sufferings peculiarly delightful both to us and to God. As for the onycha, there is a great dispute about it; the word seems to be allied with another signifying a distillation—and the Savior's blood is a marvelous distillation from His body, and His grief from His soul. The galbanum appears to have been a very bitter drug, and it has been thought therefore by commentators, that it could not have been used as a sweet perfume. I think differently. It is well known that many of the most bitter tasting drugs are sometimes the sweetest smelling when they come to the fire; and honey, which is so sweet to the taste, becomes sour when laid on the flames. I think the bitterest form of galbanum would be the most significant if that is what is intended, for it would then express the bitterness of His griefs to His own taste, but the sweetness of the savor of these bitters to the Most High. Frankincense especially you know is exceedingly bitter tasting, but extraordinarily sweet when laid upon the hot bars of iron or upon hot coals. There were many sorts of frankincense—there was one which was very rare and highly esteemed which appears to have been the pure frankincense intended here. But whatever each of those drugs may have been, or may not have been, it is certain they made a compound which God reserved to Himself, and enjoined that it should never be used by men for any sort of purpose. It was reserved for Himself to set forth the holy merits, the inimitable perfections, the transcendent glories of the Character of the sufferings of that precious Redeemer of whom God says to us, "I will accept You with Your sweet savor."

Now for two or three practical words before I pass on. Do you feel your need of this sweet savor? How can you hope to be accepted before God in yourselves? I think that the word "loathing," which occurred in our reading just now, is what we must feel with regard to our sinful selves. There may be some of you, very much growing in sanctification, who possibly look upon yourselves, and congratulate yourselves on the progress that you have made. But I confess, if I know anything of the Divine Life, that while I do feel myself more consecrated to Christ than ever I was, yet I do feel my unworthiness to be permitted to say so. My utter powerlessness to do anything as of myself is a present pressing and overwhelming thought with me, one that lowers me into the dust and ashes, and makes me sometimes wonder that Christ should even touch such an one, and yet at the same time to hope that if God, foreseeing all this evil, could nevertheless look upon me, He will not cast me away. Brothers and Sisters, do you not feel that you cannot be accepted unless it is through this sweet savor?

Well, then, when you feel this, will you, in the next place, prize that sweet savor; speak of it in the highest and most eulogistic terms? You cannot exaggerate when you speak of the virtues and merits of the Redeemer. Set a high store by His Person; prize His life, and, like St. Bernard, you may say—

"Jesus, the very thought of You
With sweetness fills my breast."

Brothers and Sisters, what a preciousness must there be in Him to overcome our want of preciousness! What a savor to put away our ill savor! What a cleansing power in His blood to take away sin such as ours! And what Glory in His Righteousness to make such unacceptable creatures to be accepted in the Beloved! And if you have gotten so far as to prize it, the next exhortation I would give you is never come before God without it. Turning back to that passage in Exodus you notice that the Lord says in the 36th verse, "You shall beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with you." Oh, never assay to meet God without that precious incense, never think of such a thing; for as the Apostle tells us, "Our God is a consuming fire." Give Him this incense to consume, that He doesn't consume us. Bring Him this merit lest our demerit should compel Him to smite us as He did Nadab and Abihu when they offered strange fire before the altar. What a blessed thing, then, to stand in prayer and feel that you are offering up again the blood of Jesus! What a delightful exercise in praise to feel that your praise comes up accepted because of the incense which He offers! Oh, to live under the shadow of the atoning Cross! Beloved, we do not experience enough of this. I confess, sorrowfully, the wanderings of my own spirit away from Calvary. May the Master bind us to the horned altar where His blood was shed, and may we never venture again to go away from that blessed spot! Do not attempt to meet God, except through the merit of this sweet savor.

Take care, dear Friends, that you never doubt your acceptance when you once have it. You cannot be accepted without Christ; but, when you have once gotten His merit, you cannot be unaccepted. Notwithstanding all your doubts and fears, and sins, Jehovah's gracious eyes never look upon you in anger; though He sees your sin, and perceives it since He is Omniscient, yet He looks at you through Christ, and then He sees no sin, for He answers the prayer of that hymn—

"Him, and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus' wounds on me."

You are always accepted in Christ, you are always blessed and beloved, always dear to the Father's heart. Therefore lift up a song, and as you see the smoking incense of the merit of the Savior coming up perpetually before the sapphire throne, let the incense of your praise go up also—

"Now to the Lamb, that once was slain,
Be endless blessings paid;
Salvation, glory, joy remain!
Forever on your head."

II. It is certain from the connection that the text means that THE LORD WILL ACCEPT THE OFFERINGS OF HIS PEOPLE WHEN HE HAS ACCEPTED THEIR PERSONS.

He will not only receive them into His Love, but all that they do for Him He will likewise receive. Before a man is accepted his best works must be unacceptable; they come from a fountain that is impure, and

they are defiled. Moreover, a man who is not reconciled to God offers nothing to God; he may seem to do so, but he has always some sinister motive which renders all his doings selfish; he has something to gain thereby or some misery to escape, and therefore he does not serve God out of a pure motive. But as soon as the man knows that he is saved, being reconciled to God by the death of His Son, then God becomes his God, and he worships Him as such, and his offerings are really presented to the Most High. These are accepted. Those things which we offer to God must be such as He has appointed. The sweet smelling savor must not be made of cassia, and cinnamon, and calamus, but it must be made of stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, and frankincense. Many persons serve God sincerely, but from lack of serving Him according to His ordained method their services cannot be accepted. God has given us a Statute Book, let us follow it. Let us not bring before God, as the Papist does, works of superstition, or unnecessary works, but let us bring such as are commanded; for to obey is better than sacrifice, to hearken, than the fat of rams. Let our lives be lives of obedience, not lives of fancy, superstition, and inventions of our own. Prayer, praise, consecration, giving, holy living—these are all ordained. Let us be diligent in the mixing up of these sweet savors.

We must bring before God, if we would be accepted in our works, something of all the virtues. It must not be all galbanum nor all stacte; not all intrepid courage without any subdued reverence, nor all the simplicity of affection without any of the sublimity of faith; it must not be all self-denial, though there must be some of it. Gravity itself must be tempered with cheerfulness; there must be something of every form of virtue to make up the blessed compound. We must endeavor to bring something of all exercises; not prayer without praise, nor works without prayer; not mental energy without spiritual gifts, nor gifts without holiness—it must be a mixture, a compound of the whole. We must bring something of all our powers—not all intellect, not all heart; it must be something of intellect in judgment and understanding; something of the heart in enthusiasm and joy; something of the body, for the members of the body are members of Christ. It must be much of the soul, for the soul's service is the soul of service. We must bring to God a compound of excellencies from all the powers which He has renewed and consecrated to Himself. Oh it were matchless if God the Holy Spirit should graciously enable us to imitate Christ in this, that we might have some of all the Divine Graces, not lacking in any respect, but as a man of God thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

We must, above all, pay great attention to small things. "You shall beat some of it very small." If we would bring a holy life to Christ, we must mind our fireside duties as well as the duties of the sanctuary; we must be attentive as servants to our service, as masters to managing the household. We must look to our private devotions, we must look to our hearts' secret longings; there must be the short as well as the long prayer; there must be the grateful spirit as well as the song of praise. Oh, that we could bring to God a life beaten small so that even in little things the Holy Spirit might be manifest, working in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure.

We must take care that this sweet incense of ours is not made for man nor used by man. Accursed is that life, however good, which lives only for

man to gaze upon; but blessed is that life which is lived for God's sake and for Christ's sake, for higher motives than man's eye could suggest, and for a nobler reward than man's hand can ever give. To be holy unto God is the grand thing, my Brothers and Sisters; to truly feel that you are not living for self, that you are not even living for your country nor for your fellow man, so much as you are living to the Most High God—the marks of whose ownership in yourself you desire to bear in your body and in your spirit. May it be yours and mine to have a life which, both in its prayer and praise, its giving and its ordinary living shall be perfumed with the fullness of the Spirit of God—a perfume that may make our life like walking through a garden, a fragrance that may make us like the king's storehouse where all manner of precious fruits are laid up, and all manner of sweet frankincense stored away! You will say, "But there will be so much imperfection notwithstanding." Ah, that there will! "There may be much defilement when we have done our best." Ah, so it is! The best of men are still men at the best. But the Word of God comes very sweetly—"I will accept you with your sweet savor." When God accepts you, He accepts what you do for His sake. He sees you no longer as a mere fallen man, but as a man renewed by His Spirit. He counts you a vessel to honor, and He puts these sweet things into you, and loves them as He sees them in you. I know the prayer is broken, but it is the prayer of His own dear child, and therefore He whom we call "Abba, Father," accepts it. I know the praise has little of music in it to the tutored ear, but it is the praise of one whose heart loves God, and He hears no discord there.

I know your gifts to His church and His poor are necessarily but little, for yours is the poor widow's portion perhaps, and you can give only your two mites; but I know that as they fall into the treasury, Jesus sits over against the treasury and hears sweet sounds in the dropping of your gifts. I know your life is such that you mourn over it every day, but still you serve God in it, and you long to serve Him more, and that love of yours is written in the Book of the King's record, and you shall be His in the day when He makes up His jewels—and your works shall be His, too, for your works shall follow you to the skies when you rise in Jesus; and your reward even for a cup of cold water shall be as sure as it will be gracious, and your entrance into the joy of your Lord shall certainly be bestowed upon you according to the Divine Grace which is in Christ Jesus by which He has accepted you. Desire, dear Friend in Christ, to be such a savor; make it your grand ambition that your life really may be fragrant to the Most High. Do not be satisfied to be an unbroken alabaster box; do not be willing to be a flower that "wastes its sweetness on the desert air," or "a gem of purest ray serene" that is hidden in the caverns of seclusion. Seek to do something—seek to serve Christ. Pray that you may be a sweet savor of Christ unto God in every place where Providence may cast your lot.

And if you are such a sweet savor, rejoice that you are so—rejoice that your name is written in Heaven. Though men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for Christ's name sake, rejoice that you are numbered with the honorable multitude who have suffered for Jesus' sake. And though you are not knights who ride first in the battle, be thankful that you may be as the esquires who follow at their heels, willing for the fray, and able to bear the buffeting which the Lord may appoint you. Care less

and less for *man's* esteem. Remember that your holiness will never shield you from slander. Rest assured that the most strict walking will never preserve you from the envenomed tongue of slander; if your life should be as pure as the crystal river that springs from beneath the Throne of the Most High, there will be found some who will muddy that stream and mire it with their feet. Coals of juniper, hot coals of juniper shall be given unto you, O you false tongue! But as for you, Believer, care not for that tongue, though it is sharp as a razor, and though every cut of it is poisonous as the poison of an adder. Bear it! Bear it, for do you not understand that your incense was never meant for man's approbation, but for the Most High? It must be for God, and for God only; and if man cannot smell it, or appreciate its savor, what shall I say but, Though it was meet that my pearls should not be cast before swine, if they have happened to be where swine may trample on them, the swine acts but according to its nature, and the pearl is not hurt by the swine's feet—it is still a pearl when trampled in the mire—a pearl that God's eyes will see and fetch out, notwithstanding all.

And oh, dear Friends, bless the Lord Jesus day by day, that your works are made accepted with yourself through Him. When you have done anything that is right, and good, and pure, bring it and lay it at His feet. Come here, you who toil with holy industry, and bring your sheaves to store in the garner of your Boaz whose fields you have reaped. Come here, you who have found jewels diving into the depths of human sin to bring them up, and lay these pearls at the feet of Solomon, who is master of the seas into which you have dived. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and they who dwell therein." And especially are we, the blood-besprinkled ones, the sacramental host of God's Elect ordained as priests to offer sacrifices acceptable unto God. Oh, let us praise the Love that bought us, the blood that redeemed us, the Power that sustains us, the Grace that smiles upon us, the Righteousness that covers us, the arm which supports us, and the whole Redeemer who is able and willing, and before long will receive us to Himself and to our great reward.

May we all look to Jesus and to His merit, and then go forth, for the love we bear His name, to show Him afresh in our own persons to the sons of men. The Lord accept this morning's offering for His name's sake. Amen.

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TEMPTATIONS ON THE PINNACLE
NO. 689

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 6, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down, for it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge over You,' and, 'in their hands they shall bear You up, lest at any time You dash Your foot against a stone.' Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"
Matthew 4:5-7.

THE clearest and most important exposition of the Revelation of God in the Inspired Book is the Revelation of God in the renewed man. Every Christian will discover, in proportion to his advances in Divine knowledge, that the very things which are written in these hallowed pages are written in his own experience. We never fully understand Divine Truth until we have experienced it; the diamond of Divine Promise never glistens so brightly as when it is placed in the setting of personal trial and experience, and the gold of sacred Truth is not valued until it has been tried "so as by fire."

Holy Scripture is full of narratives of temptations; expect, therefore, Christian, that your life will be as abundantly garnished with them as is a rose with thorns. Provision is made in the Word of God for the assaults of Satan from all quarters and in all fashions; believe, therefore, most confidently that the wise provisions of forethought are not made in vain, but will be needed in your own proper person. You will have to do battle with those spiritual foes which have beset and buffeted other saints in days gone by, and you will be wise to array yourself in those pieces of heavenly armor which proved to be so great a safeguard to them in their seasons of warfare. This remark, that the Word of God is written out again in the life of the Christian, is emphatically true in that part of it which concerns the life of Jesus. Every Christian is the image of Christ in proportion as he is a Christian. In proportion as the Spirit sanctifies us, spirit, soul, and body, and makes us like the Master, we are conformed to Him, not only in the holiness and spirituality which sanctification produces, but also in our experience of conflict, sorrow, agony, and triumph. In all points Jesus was made like unto His brethren, and now it remains that in all things His brethren should be made like He. The Savior's public life begins and ends with temptation. It commences in the wilderness in a close contest with Satanic craft, it ends in Gethsemane in a dreadful affray with the powers of darkness. There are a few bright spots between, but the gloom of the desert deepens into the midnight

darkness of the Cross, as if to show us that we, also, must begin with trial, and must reckon upon ending with it. The victory of our Lord was won upon Golgotha in blood and wounds, amid the blasphemous exultation of His foes, and the victory of the Believer will not be cheaply bought. Our crown is not to be won without wrestling and overcoming; we must fight if we would reign, and through the same conflicts which brought the Savior to His crown, must we obtain the palm branch of everlasting victory. Be it so, O Master, only let us be prepared for it, and by Your Grace may we be strengthened so that we may be more than conquerors through Him who has loved us.

I shall, this morning, first of all take you, dear Friends, to *look at the temptation itself as we have felt it;* and then, secondly, I shall offer *a few considerations deduced therefrom.*

I. First we are to VIEW THE TEMPTATION ITSELF.

The landscape is colored by the glass through which the observer looks, but still the landscape is really seen; and so in giving you, this morning, much of that which I have myself been made to endure, I may color our Lord's trial, but you will see it notwithstanding, and the Holy Spirit will show you what is really of Jesus, and what is only mine. Our trials are sent us on purpose to make us comprehend our Lord's trials, and especially is it so with ministers of the Gospel. Martin Luther was a mighty master in the art of consolation, because there was scarcely a temptation, except that of covetousness, which he had not experienced. Melancthon bears witness of Luther that he was sometimes so tempted of the devil that he appeared to be at the point of death; the sap and strength of his life seemed to be dried up, and his soul was full of heaviness. After such seasons he would so preach that each of his hearers thought that he was speaking concerning him alone, and wondered from where his knowledge was derived. He learned the art of spiritual navigation from having himself done business upon deep waters of spiritual tribulation. Luther's remark stands true that prayer, meditation, and temptation are the three best instructors of the Gospel minister, and since I have been much of late in the last school, I cannot do other than use what I have learned. Now it may be while I am describing this temptation of our Lord, or rather our own temptations as they are conformed to the temptations of Jesus, that I may meet the peculiar case of some troubled one who has been long in doubt and darkness, and who may, today, find light and peace. If it is so, the Spirit of God shall be glorified, and it shall be to me a sweet recompense for those gloomy hours through which I have lately groped my way.

I first call your attention to *the place of this temptation.* "Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple." It was a *high* place and a *holy* place, hence a double danger. It was a *high* place—the temptation could not have acted upon the Savior had He been sitting in the desert or kneeling in the Garden; but aloft, above the city, on the towering pinnacle, the foothold was slender, and

the fall would have been terrible. Beneath Him lay a wondrous panorama, the courts of the Lord's House, the streets of the city, the towns and villages of Judea, and the broad acres of Immanuel's land. Little, however, would He care for all these, for His thoughts were concentrated upon the combat within; yet the widened prospect must have added to the sense of elevation, and so have aided the temptation. Brothers and Sisters, it is very hard to stand in high places. Those of you who are in humble positions of society may be very grateful for the safety which usually grows out of lowliness. No doubt you envy those who are more known and more wealthy, but if you knew all, instead of envying them you would thank God for the lot which is meted out to you. I would be afraid to exchange my temptations with any other man, and yet I know my own to be full more than I should be able to sustain were it not for the Grace of God and the promise, "My Grace is sufficient for you." It is difficult to carry a full cup without spilling some of the contents; when half full you may carry it more carelessly without a slip, but when the golden chalice is full to the brim, beware, you cup-bearer of the King. You may walk along the plain, no, you may leap like the children at their play, you may sport at random where you will, but up along yon narrow knife-like ridge where awful precipices descend on either side, take care, O Traveler, for one slip may be fatal. Look beneath you through the grim mist which hides the depths below, and be deeply grateful for the invisible and Omnipotent hand which has sustained you until now.

The remark as to high places does not merely apply to really high places of wealth, or influence, or fame, but to places high for us, comparatively high places of enjoyment and satisfaction. Nor must I exclude holy places from the remark. The mountain may be Tabor, but it is still a mountain. If you are called to the elevated position of one who dwells in rapt fellowship with Christ, there are temptations peculiar even to that happy state of mind. The pinnacle is none the less a pinnacle because it happens to be the pinnacle of the Temple; no, let me here note that it is even more dangerous. The place was not only high but holy. Note how that is marked in the text. He took Him to *the holy city* and to the pinnacle of the *Temple*—two words—as if to bring up vividly before the reader's mind the sanctity of the position. To stand in a high place, my Brothers and Sisters, in God's House is very desirable and very honorable, but oh, it is both responsible and perilous. Let those beware whom God exalts in Israel. He of whom it is written that it were better for that man that he had never been born was no less than an Apostle. He who kept the bag and was the intimate friend of Christ is that man whose damnation surpasses all others in its flaming terrors. It is a very delightful thing, no doubt, to minister to a large congregation, and to be pastor of a numerous flock; it is a very good degree to earn to be an officer of the Christian Church; it is no small privilege to be permitted by the pen or by the tongue to edify multitudes of saints; but alas, the high places, even of God's Temple, are dizzy places, and lofty positions in the

Church are sites where temptations attack us which would be unknown to us if in the humble obscurity of a retiring piety we were to lie down in green pastures and feed beside the still waters. After all, if I might be allowed to envy anybody it would be the position of John Bunyan's Shepherd, singing, as he feeds his flock in the valley—

"He who is down need fear no fall,
He who is low no pride.
He who is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

What do you think, Beloved, were the temptations which came upon the Savior on account of His position on the high and holy place? We frequently forget, when we are speaking of the Savior, that He was most truly Man. He was Divine without mitigation of the royalty and splendor of Deity; but He was Man, altogether such as we are, so that He felt as you and I would have felt in a similar condition. How, then, did He feel? Did He not tremble with fear of falling? Standing there and looking down, I believe the natural fear came over Him that He must fall, and that falling He would stain the battlements of the consecrated place, and crimson the House of God with His own blood. You will think me singular in imagining that the Savior could be the subject of such feelings, but was He not a Man, and what man would feel otherwise? It is natural that a shivering emotion of dread should creep over anyone standing in so lofty and unprotected a position. Now this is a temptation—a temptation to which God's servants who are put upon the pinnacle of the Temple will find themselves frequently subject. But is it a fault to be afraid of falling? Yes. No. It is no fault to be afraid of falling, else the Savior would not have felt it; He was holy and consequently no sinful emotion could cross His breast. But there is a something growing out of the fear of falling which is very faulty, namely, the temptation to do something desperate in order to escape from the position which is so full of peril. It is right for me to be afraid of falling into sin; it is not right for me either to mistrust God's Grace, which will sustain me, or to run to foolish means in order to escape from the particular peril in which I happen to be involved. Jesus did not doubt His Father's care—He could not, for He was Perfect; but He did tremble because of the danger in which He was placed; He must have done so because He was a man of like passions like ourselves.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, may I picture some of you lifted up to such a position? Either in wealth, or in honor, or in communion, or in some way, you are lifted up into a sphere of danger, and you begin to say to yourself, "Suppose I should fall! Oh, suppose I should disgrace my profession, and bring dishonor upon the cause of Christ? What if my foot should slip, and I should defile the Church of God with the blood of my eternal ruin and of my present disgrace?" I can understand that thought crossing your mind without any sin being involved in it—no, with even a good resolve springing from it—namely, to walk humbly with your God; but I can suppose it to be the fulcrum upon which Satan may plant his

lever, and begin to work so as to bring you into a very sadly weakened and wretched state of mind. Oh Beloved, when I see others falling from their pinnacles, when I feel my own head grow dizzy, when I look down and see the ruin that must come upon every man who apostatizes from the faith, when I look up and see the holiness of God, and then look down and feel the attractions of the world enticing and drawing me down to destruction, I can but tremble. I cannot do otherwise, and I cannot understand the man who would not. If you are placed in such a position you *must* feel it, it is not possible for you to escape from the fear lest, after all, after having been honored and favored you should become a castaway.

This seems to me to be the reason why the devil put our Lord on the pinnacle of the Temple. The first effort of the devil was to sap the foundations of the Savior's strength with *a doubt.* The devil whispers to Him, *"If—if* You are the Son of God." Faith is the Christian's strength; he who doubts not, staggers not. Unbelief is the source of our chief weakness. As soon as we begin to distrust, our feet begin to slide. Hence, Satan, knowing this, injects that cruel and wicked suspicion, *"If—if* you are the Son of God."

Notice the point of attack—it was our Lord's Sonship. Satan knows that if he can make any of us doubt our interest in the Father's Love, doubt our regeneration and adoption, then he will have us very much in his power. How can I pray, "Our Father which are in Heaven," if I do not know Him to be my Father? If the dark suspicion crosses my mind that I am no child of His, I cannot say with the prodigal, "I will arise and go unto my Father," for I do not know that I have a Father to go to. Having a Father, I feel sure that He will pity my infirmities, that He will feel for my needs, redress my wrongs, protect me in the hour of danger, and succor me in the moment of peril; but if, *if* I have no Father in Heaven, if I am not His child, then, miserable orphan! What shall I do—where shall I flee? Standing on a pinnacle as God's child I shall stand there erect, though every wind should seek to whirl me from my foothold; but if He is not my Father, and I am upon a pinnacle, then my destruction is inevitable, and my ruin will be swift and total. "If you are the Son of God." Oh, dear Friends, beware of unbelief; those who justify unbelief hold a candle to the devil. I cannot suppose myself doing better service to an ill cause than by excusing you in your unbelief of God, or excusing myself in it. God is faithful; why do we doubt Him? God is true; how can we suppose that He will be false? That we are His children is also true if we have believed in Jesus. If, having nothing, I have cast myself at the foot of the Cross; if, all guilty and defiled, I have seen in Jesus Christ all that my soul can need, then I am one with Jesus, and a joint heir with Him. I must be the child of God because I am one with Christ Jesus, His only begotten and His well-beloved.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let me exhort and stir you all up to seek after the full assurance of your sonship with God the Father. Give no

sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, unless you know that you are in the Divine Family. Remember that doubts here are perilous to the last degree, and most of all perilous to those of you who stand upon the pinnacle. Let those doubt who are in the valley and they bring themselves sorrow, but those on the mountain must not doubt, for it is by faith alone that they can stand, and where to slip will be so destructive they must take care that their faith is firm and strong. Thus you see the Savior was first assailed with a malicious and cruel insinuation of doubt. The cunning tempter has paved the way for *the Satanic suggestion,* "Cast Yourself down." That advice looks like the most absurd thing that could be suggested. He is afraid of falling, and is therefore bid to throw Himself down? Ah, but if you do not understand this, it is because you are not acquainted with Satanic machinery. The human mind oscillates very strangely. Though at first it may be driven by main force from left to right, it naturally swings to the left again, returning by sheer necessity to the same point. There have been persons who have starved themselves to death from the fear of being poor and destitute, and have brought on disease by fearing disease. There have been instances of persons who have sought to destroy themselves when condemned, because they dreaded being hanged. What escape from death suicide can offer it is hard to say, but some have tried it. In a position where I cannot stand, the natural thing is to throw myself down directly. You are afraid as you stand on the brink of the cliff, afraid that you may fall over, and all the while a mad inclination to fall over may steal over you. It is strange, but then we are strange creatures. Though it looks to you as if it would be a very unlikely temptation to a man afraid of falling to say, "Cast yourself down," it is not unnatural, it is consistent with the well-known laws of consciousness that we are often tempted to do the very thing which we are afraid of doing, and to do it in order to escape from it; cast yourself down, lest you should fall.

Let me show you the shapes in which this temptation has come to some of us. The minister of Christ is placed in a position where his labors and his troubles are incessant. He is afraid, with so much to do and such delicate things to handle, that he may make a mistake and injure the Church which he designs to bless. The dark suggestion crosses his mind, "Give it up; leave the work," that is to say, do the worst mischief that you can do to the Church in order to prevent your doing it any mischief! The same thing happens in business; you have been toiling hard to pay every man his own, to provide things honest in the sight of all men; you have been able to do it until now, but things are, at this moment, very unfavorable. Satan has whispered to many a tradesman, "Throw it up; get out of it! Go somewhere else! Leave it, and flee the country." Take another case. You are a Christian, and you wish to be an honor to the Christian Church; but you live in a family where there is everything uncongenial to your piety; you can scarcely get alone to pray, you certainly never hear a good word from any others of the circle. You

have been fighting for God until now, and the enemy is at this moment saying, "Do not try it any longer; renounce your profession; give it all up; go back to the world again." In other words, in order that you may not dishonor Christ you are tempted to dishonor Him, and for fear lest you should fall, the whisper is, "Fall at once." It is strange, but strangely true! I thank God for the story of Jonah; that miserable, morose old Prophet has ever been a warning to some of us. When God said to Jonah, "Go to Nineveh and preach!" "No," thought Jonah, "I cannot do it. How can I go and preach to such a city? It will not be to my honor." So away he goes to Tarshish. He little knew that in trying to avoid trouble he was running into it! So it is also with us. You want to go to Tarshish to get away from Babylon, that is, you run into the depths of the sea to escape the rivers; you run into the fire to escape from the frying pan! Should I happen to be addressing a Christian who is passing through this terrible, severe, and fiery ordeal, I would point him to the Savior standing on the pinnacle of the Temple, with the suggestion, "Cast Yourself down," and bid him imitate Him in standing fast and firm against the desperate foe. "Stand fast in the Lord, and having done all, still stand."

The suggestion to cast Himself down was next *backed up by a text of Scripture*—wicked advice sustained by a foolish argument. "Throw Yourself down; because He has given His angels charge over You, to keep You." You notice he knocks out the words, "in all your ways," which limits the protection promised. The Lord never promises to keep us in ways of our own choosing. If we go into By-Path Meadow, we go there without a guarantee of Divine Protection, for the Word has it, "in all your ways." Every duty that is required of us, and every path that is mapped out by Providence shall have Divine Protection accorded to its travelers, but if we go our own road, we have no promise that we shall be cared for. When the devil takes something away from a text, he generally puts something of his own in its place. He therefore added these words, *"lest at any time."* His object was to make the text more general than it was—to take away its specialties, to break down its hedges, and to remove its landmarks, and so he says, "to keep You, lest at any time You dash Your foot against a stone." Old Master Trapp has well observed that in his day the king was bound to protect travelers on the King's Highway between certain hours, "but," said he, "he did not promise to protect them out of the King's Highway, nor did he promise to protect them in it if they traveled at all hours, for instance, at the dead of night." So we have a promise that along the King's Highway to Heaven no lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up from it, but the redeemed shall be found there. But if I strike off a path into the wilderness, or go away into the jungle of my own superstition and my own folly, I cannot expect protection, and if I begin to travel *at any time,* choosing my own times instead of waiting for the pillar of cloud, then I am not under the Divine Protection, nor can I expect it.

Does the text, as you find it in the 91st Psalm, give you any reason to believe that if you throw yourself down from the pinnacle, God would bring you to the bottom safely? Certainly not; a fair reading of it only shows that God will keep us in the path of duty. And so, dear Friends, let us, when Satan tells us a Christian is all right and always safe, go where he may; let us respond to that, that it is true the Christian is safe in the way of duty, and will be kept in the path of God's commands, but he that presumptuously runs in the teeth of God's will, and disobeys the Most High, must look to it lest a lion tear him in pieces. Brothers and Sisters, it is a precious Doctrine that the saints are safe, but it is a damnable inference from it that, therefore, they may live as they like. It is a glorious Truth that God will keep His people, but it is an abominable falsehood that sin will do them no harm. Remember that God gives us liberty, not license, and while He gives us protection He will not allow us presumption. I knew a person once when I was a child, I remember seeing him go into a country wake in a little village where I lived, though he was a professed Christian, going to spend the evening in a dancing booth, and with others drinking as other men did, and when I in my warm zeal said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" his reply was, "I am a child of God, and I can go where I like and yet be safe." And though for the moment I knew not what text to quote to answer him, yet my soul revolted from the man ever afterwards, for I felt that no child of God would ever be so wicked as to take poison in the faith that his Father would give him the antidote, or thrust himself into the fire in the hope that he should not be burned.

If God sends me trouble He will yield me deliverance from it, but if I make trouble myself I must bear it. If Providence permits the devil to set me upon a pinnacle, even then God will help me, but if I throw myself down and go in the very teeth of Providence, then woe unto me, for I give proof by my presumption that the Grace of God is not in me at all. Yet the temptation is not uncommon. Do such-and-such a thing; your eternal interests are safe, therefore shun God's service, throw up the reins, and let the horses go as they will, God will guide them. Do not touch the tiller, the God of the wind will manage the vessel; do not put your shoulder to the wheel at all, but cry out to God to help you, and sit down and be lazy. That is the devil's talk, and our poor silly distracted minds too readily drink it in; but if God gives us Divine Grace, we shall say, "God helps those who help themselves; God works for those who work for Him, and in the name of God I set up my banner; wherever He will call me I will go, though it be through floods and flames; and if He sets me upon the pinnacle of the Temple, I will do nothing but stand there till He takes me down, but as to throwing myself down in order to escape, O my Father, my God, by the love You bear me, help me to wrestle with this temptation, and make me more than a conqueror through Your dear Son."

Only one thing more remains to be spoken of while upon the text itself, and that is *the answer which the Savior gave.* He said, "It is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" I noticed, when I was carefully reading this verse over and thinking of it, that Jesus met a promise misused with a precept properly applied. At that moment the precept was worth more to Christ than the promise. Beloved, there are certain people who love the promise part of God's Word, but cannot bear the precept. We have men among us, who, when the minister preaches upon a sweet text, are greatly delighted, that is savory meat such as their soul loves; but if the pastor expounds a precept of God's Word, they turn upon their heel proudly and say, "He is a legal preacher." It is not safe to pick and choose in the matters of Divine Truth. All hail, you fair promises! You meet me as the angels met Jacob at Mahanaim; but all hail, fair precepts! You meet me as Nathan met David, and rebuke me for my sins. You, also, are my friends, and I salute you and am glad to bear your company. Beloved, we cannot do without a promise, precept, exhortation, and rebuke; the compound of the Scripture, like the powders of the merchants for sweetness and excellence, must not be injured by being robbed of one single ingredient. Love the precept, I pray you; be of the mind of David who wrote the whole of the 119th Psalm, not so much in praise of the promises as in praise of the statutes and the Laws of God as he found them given in that part of the Old Testament which it was his privilege to read. Sometimes a precept is the necessary counteracting principle to guard us from the perversion of a promise. Promises alone are like candy given to children which when too profusely eaten, bring on sickness, but the precept comes in as a healthy tonic so that you may feed upon the promise without injury.

Brothers and Sisters, is there one of you who is so false and faithless as to desire to shun God's service and God's love? Hear this—"You shall not tempt the Lord your God." You do so; you tempt God; you tempt Him to sanction your sin when you use wrong means in order to escape from danger. A Christian in business who is going to stoop to a transaction that is not altogether clean in order to escape from his present dilemma is tempting God, for he asks God to help him, and then uses evil tools to effect escape. Will you tempt God to assist you in defrauding your neighbor? Dare you ask God to aid you in doing what is not strictly upright? Do not dare to do this. "You shall not tempt the Lord your God." The Christian worker, who dares to run away from work, and says, "God will take care of me"—what is he doing? He is asking God one of two things, either to destroy him, which God will not do, for He is a faithful God; or he is tempting Him to uphold him and comfort him when he is not in the path of duty, which it would be wrong for God to do since He cannot give the sweetness of His comfort, and the joy of His countenance to a man who would thereby be countenanced and encouraged in sin.

Beware of provoking God to jealousy! Let your walk be such that the Lord may be honored by it, and may look down with complacency upon

you. Do not run to such shifts as would involve your asking God to assist you in a wrong thing in order to obtain your deliverance. Though there are great depths beneath you, you cannot fall while He upholds. Though others are dashed in pieces, and you can hear the crash of their fearful fall, yet He upholds the righteous. Though your own brain turns giddy, and you are ready to slip from your foothold, yet the Eternal God is your Refuge, and underneath you are the everlasting arms; your extremity of weakness shall be the opportunity of His Power, and when you fall back faint and ready to die, then it is that the angelic wings shall be of service and the cherub-helpers shall bear you up in their arms, lest you dash your foot against a stone. Only be very courageous and confident, and say unto the fiend of Hell, "Get away from me, for the God who allowed me to be placed here never did forsake me and never will, and while He is for me I will not fear." What may occur is no business of mine, it rests with Him; it is mine to stand in the path of duty, for thus I shall be in the place of safety.

II. I have said much upon the temptation itself, and now in closing I wish to offer A FEW CONSIDERATIONS DEDUCED FROM THE WHOLE.

The first is this. It is a commonplace thought, but it has tasted like nectar to my weary heart. *Jesus was tempted as I am.* You have heard that Truth of God a thousand times—have you grasped it? He was not exempted from any of the sinful temptations which occur to us. He was tempted to the very same sins into which we fall. Do not dissociate Jesus from yourself. It is a dark room which you are going through, but Jesus went through it before. It is a sharp fight which you are waging, but Jesus has stood foot to foot with the same enemy. It was a great encouragement to the Macedonians in their weary marches when they saw Alexander toiling always with them. Had Alexander always been riding on Bucephalus when the rest of them were marching, they would have grown weary, but Alexander marched like a common soldier, and when water was scarce Alexander thirsted with them, and refused to drink of the little water which was reserved as a royal luxury. "No," he said, "I will suffer with my men." They won their battles, and they drove the Persian rabble before them as lions drive a herd of sheep, principally through the personal prowess of Alexander. First to leap into the ditch, first to cross the river or scale the rampart, always adventuring himself for death or glory; every man grew into a hero at the sight of the hero. Let it be so with followers of Jesus. He stays not in the pavilion when His children are in conflict; He robes not Himself in scarlet apparel like a king at his ease, but He buckles on His armor and puts on His helmet, and above the cry of them who contend for mastery may be heard His cry, "I have trod down strength." Jesus goes so far into the fight that He advances beyond the front rank, and can say, "I have trod the winepress *alone,* and of the people there was none with Me." Oh Brothers and Sisters, let us be of good cheer, Christ has gone the way before us, and

the bloody footprints of the King of Glory may be seen along the road which we traverse at this hour.

There is something yet sweeter—*Jesus was tempted, but Jesus never sinned.* Then, my Soul, it is not necessary for you to sin, for Jesus was a Man, and if one Man endured these temptations and sinned not, then by the same Grace another may do so. I know it seems to some of you beginners in the Divine Life, that you cannot be tempted without sinning, but believe me, this is not only possible, but I hope attainable by you. A man may be tempted to run away from the service of God, but he may hate the temptation, and then there is no sin in it to him. If I should meet a thief on the road today who should ask me to break into a person's house, I should at once condemn the suggestion—do you think I would sin because I happened to be tempted in that way? Not at all! The sin would lay with the tempter, not with the tempted person who instantaneously rejected the suggestion. If I were to dally with the thief, and say, "How much is to be gained by it? What are your plans? I will go with you if so-and-so," then I sin. But if I say at once, "How dare you come to me with such a temptation? I loath it," then I should commit no sin. Often God's servants, in their worst and most bitter temptations, are to a great extent free from sin and are to be pitied—not to be blamed. John Bunyan has a famous picture of Christian going through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, when the fiends whispered temptations in his ears, "So," said he, "I did verily think that these were in my own heart," whereas they were only temptations of the devil, and not his own; and because he hated them, there was no sin in them—to him I mean. Of course, there was sin to the person who made the suggestion, but not to the person suffering it, inasmuch as he stopped his ears against it, and refused to touch it. Now, Christian, in this you may be encouraged, that you may go through the fiercest possible temptation heated seven times hotter, like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, and yet the fire may not injure you, but you may come out with not so much as the smell of fire upon you though, you have trod in the midst of the glowing coals.

The third thing which comforts us is this, that *Jesus not only did not fall, but He gloriously triumphed.* Satan received a desperate fall and a deep discouragement as the result of this conflict, and as Jesus overcame, so may we. Jesus is the representative Man for His people; the Head has triumphed, and the members share in the victory. While a man's head is above the water you cannot drown his body. The head is above the great floodwaters of temptation, and we, who are the lower members, are not drowned, nor shall we be; we shall wade through the swelling current, and land safely upon Canaan's side. "They feared as they entered into the cloud," it is said of the disciples on the Mount, but their Master was with them there, and therefore their fears were frivolous. We, too, are fearing, because we have entered the cloud or are in the midst of it, but our fears are needless and vain, for Christ is with us, armed for our defense. Brothers and Sisters, our place of safety is the

bosom of the Savior. Perhaps we are tempted just now in order to drive us nearer to Him. Blessed is any wind that blows me into the port of my Savior's Love! Happy, happy, happy wounds which make me seek the beloved Physician! Yes, blessed Death, which with black wings shall bear me up to my Savior's Throne! Anything is good that brings us to Christ; anything is mischievous that parts us from Him. Come, you tempted, wherever you wander, come to your tempted Savior; come, you cast-down and troubled ones, however much dismayed, come to Him—

"Though now He reigns exalted high
His love is still as great."

He forgets not the temptations through which He passed, and He is ready to succor and to help you in the same.

Ah, but there are some here who do not know Him, some who say, "We do not understand this sermon, for we never feel such temptations." I can understand why not. You see, you have no spiritual life. The tree planted by the river feels not the chill which breeds in the marsh, and lurks in the swamp; but put a man there and before long you will see him shivering from head to foot; and the carnal mind, dead in sin, knows not the fog of temptation which lurks around him. But oh, if you were alive unto God your struggle would begin, and you would cry to the strong for help! My advice to you is that which I gave to the Christian just now—the Believer must go to Christ for help, and so must you. There is balm in Gilead; there is a Physician there. Sinner, if you look to Christ you shall live. Though you stand today upon the pinnacle, for life is such; though death is your dreadful fate, and the fiery lake is your everlasting portion, presume not, dash not yourself further into sin, plunge not into ruin, but lift your eyes upwards and say, "My God, my Father, help me! God the Son who did redeem with precious blood, wash me from my sin! Spirit of the living God renew me in heart and life," and it shall be done, for, "he who asks, receives, he who seeks, finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

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A LESSON FROM THE GREAT PANIC
NO. 690

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 13, 1866,
BY *C. H. SPURGEON,*
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."
Hebrews 12:27.

IT is a most popular error that the world stands still, and is fixed and immovable. This has been touted as an astronomical theory, but as a matter of practical principle it still reigns in men's minds. Galileo said, "No, the world is not a fixed body, it moves." Peter had long before declared that all these things should be dissolved; at last men believed the astronomer, but they still doubt the Apostle, or at least forget his writings. Though it is clear as noonday in Scripture and in experience that stability is not to be found beneath the moon, yet men are forever building upon earth's quicksand as if it were substantial rock, and heaping up its dust as though it would not all be blown away. "This is the substance," cries the miser, as he clutches his bags of gold; "Heaven and Hell are myths to me." "This is the main chance," whispers the merchant as he pushes vigorously his commercial speculations; "as for spiritual things they are for mere dreamers and sentimentalists. Cash is the true treasure." Ah, Sirs, you base your statements upon a foundation of lies. This world *is* as certainly a mere revolving ball as to human life as it is astronomically; and hopes founded on it will as surely come to nothing as will card houses in a storm. Here we have no abiding city, and it is in vain to attempt to build one. This world is not the rock beneath our feet which it seems to be; it is no better than those green, but treacherously soft and bottomless bogs which swallow up unwary travelers.

We talk of *terra firma* as if there could be such a thing as solid earth; never was an adjective more thoroughly misused, for the world passes away and the fashion thereof. Every now and then, in order to enforce this distasteful Truth of God upon us, the God of Providence gives the world, in some way or other, a warning shake. The Lord has only to lay one finger upon the world, and the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, while the waters of the ocean roar and are troubled until the mountains shake with their swelling. The most solid fabrics of human

skill and industry are dissolved at the voice of the Most High; though they appear to possess the firmness of earth, and claim the sublimity of Heaven, yet one Divine Word shakes earth and Heaven in a moment. Looking back through history, you will observe many periods of very tremendous shakings, the records of which are indelibly engraved upon human memory. An empire has been piled up by conquest and cemented by policy and power; monarchs of gigantic mind have been sustained by armies of indomitable valor, and great dynasties have been established whose reign promised to be as enduring as the sun, but God has shaken, and the diadem has fallen, and the kingdoms become desolate. Babylon sat as a Queen and said, "I shall see no sorrow," but she became desolate, and her palaces crumbled into a heap of ruins. The power of Persia wore the aspect of permanence, and proudly claimed universal dominion, but the iron rod of Alexander broke it in pieces as a potter's vessel. Nor could the Macedonian Empire long continue, but soon gave place to the mightier power of Rome, which, with all its valiant legions, lasted but its time, and then, like a bowing wall, fell headlong to the ground. Even as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is lost forever, so dynasties, republics, empires, all pass away. As a dream, when one awakes, their image is gone forever.

Between the intervals of these great revolutions there have been changes less extensive, but still of the same warning character. Every now and then in our commerce God gives a serious shake to our affairs. Men usually have a degree of confidence in their fellow men, and on the strength of this legitimate confidence, business flourishes; but, all of a sudden, as though seized with madness, they say in their haste with David, "All men are liars," and clamor for their gold. The boat is quite able to ferry them all across the stream if they will have patience, but they are carried away with the notion that it will soon be swamped, and therefore they push and fight to get on board all at once, and bring to pass the very evil which they feared. Had they but a little patience and a little forbearance, were they much less greedy, and much more considerate of others, things might still go well enough; but selfishness takes fire at the least suspicion, blazes into mistrust, and setting its neighbor's house on fire to save its own candle, soon finds its own dwelling in flames, too. Greed is so afraid lest one brick of its house should be stolen that it pulls out the cornerstone to keep it safe under the bed, and the whole building tumbles about its ears.

Few of us ever dreamed of seeing such a panic as that of the last two days, and now, pausing in the midst of it, it may be well to look around. What about these commercial shakings? How can we account for them?

Are they not results of the law of change and instability, which is stamped upon every created thing? Instead of wondering at panics, we may well wonder that they do not come more often. In considering the body of the commonwealth, we may say of it as Dr. Watts does of our natural body—

"Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long."

No wonder that the machine of commerce sometimes gets out of order, the wonder is that with so much dirt of trickery, deceit, and covetousness, it goes on at all. Considering the depravity of the heart of man, it is perfectly marvelous that human governments are so stable, and that mortal affairs run so smoothly; we can only attribute it to the presiding Providence of God that there are not many more crashes and disasters. But still what of these shakings? If they must come, what must we say of them? Why, this much, that ultimately they are among the greatest blessings which God sends us, for with all their attendant calamities they shake only the things which may be shaken, while the things which cannot be shaken remain, and remain in a healthier state because the unsound and rotten things have been discovered and removed.

We shall regard our text as declaring a great general principle, that God shakes in order that the things which can be shaken, may fall, and that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. We will try to carry out that principle to practical purpose this morning.

I. First the original drift of the statement refers to THE OLD JEWISH DISPENSATION.

The Ceremonial Law was a very wonderful system of types and figures. To the spiritually-minded Israelite it was an illustrated book full of precious teaching. Prophets and kings delighted to study it; such men as David and the like perused its sacred pages both day and night with ever fresh delight—but, after all, the Jewish dispensation with all its outward splendor and inward meaning, was still a thing that could be shaken; and therefore when its time of shaking came, all the created part of it passed away, and only its eternal truths remained. Today we find the Jew, but we do not find the Mosaic economy. Israel has neither priest, nor sacrifice, nor altar, nor temple. Jerusalem is trod under foot by the Gentiles, and Zion's hill no longer echoes to the voice of Psalms; Judah's sons are banished far away, and her daughters dwell in exile. The outward economy was shaken at the coming of our Lord, and as an external thing has ceased to be. How was it that it could be shaken? One reason was that *it had so much to do with materialism.* It needed an altar of earth or stone, and such altars the hand of the spoiler can overturn. It

required a bullock that has horns and hoofs, and such sacrifices the plague may slay; it demanded a priest of the house of Aaron, and a race of men may be cut off from the families of the nations; it needed a tabernacle or a temple, and a building made with hands is readily demolished; hence it could be shaken.

The veil of the temple has been rent, the great stones of the temple are thrown down, a priest with Urim and Thummim no more appears, and a consecrated altar no longer smokes. Where is the Ark with its mystic cherubim? Where the table of showbread, and the golden candlestick, and the tables of stone? These were but things which are made, and they have been shaken and removed; but the things which cannot be shaken still remain; our spiritual altar still endures, our great High Priest still lives, our house not made with hands is still eternal in the heavens. Our spiritual faith depends not upon materialism. We have no altar of brass or stone, our Lord Jesus sanctifies our offerings; we have no incense of frankincense and onycha, the merits of our Savior are sweeter by far. We need no temple nor holy of holies within the veil, for we worship God in spirit, and—

"Wherever we seek Him He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.

We have given up all that which binds unseen realities to the shadows, which are seen; and now we are no more as to our faith in bondage to the beggarly elements of matter, time, and space.

The Jewish religion could be shaken because it could be combated by material forces. Antiochus could profane its altars, Titus could burn its temple, and cast down the walls of the sacred city; but no invader can pollute the heavenly altar of our spiritual faith by brute force, or destroy the celestial bulwarks of our hope by fire and sword. Material forces are not available in our warfare, for we wrestle not with flesh and blood. The tyrant may burn our martyrs and cast our confessors into prison, but the pure Truth of Jesus is neither consumed by fire nor bound with chains; it has within itself essential immortality and liberty. The Doctrine that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners is no more to be wounded by the sword of persecution than is the ocean to be scarred by the keels of navies. When winds may be manacled, when waves are fettered, and when clouds may be shut up in dungeons, then, no not even then, may the Word of God be bound. The free spirit of the Cross of Christ cannot be vanquished by armies, nor can legions tread it down. If our devotion hovered around an earthly shrine, and could only be presented by a certain order of men robed in a peculiar garb, and chanting a peculiar ritual, then the Truth of Christ might be put down for a while, if not extinguished; but we depend on none of these things,

we can as well worship God in barns as in basilicas, in catacombs as in cathedrals; farmers and paupers are as much priests to God as presbyters or prelates; and solemn silence may yield as true praise as the voices of the sons of music with all their pipes and organs. Our religion is so spiritual that Death itself, in ridding us of these material bodies, shall rather assist than injure our devotions, so that we laugh to scorn both spear, and sword, and buckler, for our holy faith is beyond the reach of carnal weapons.

Moreover, the Mosaic economy passed away because it could be affected by time. The Ark was made of long-enduring gopher wood, but it has yielded to time. The veil was one of the most costly and durable fabrics, but it yielded to the strain, and was rent from top to bottom. The Temple itself, if it had not been destroyed by the enemy, would have grown gray with age, for age strikes with impartial hand buildings both holy and profane. "Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away." But see the Doctrine of the Cross of Christ! No time affects it. The message of salvation by Divine Grace is as fresh today as when Peter preached it at Pentecost. The great command, "Believe and live," has as much life-giving power about it as when it was first applied by the Holy Spirit. No time affects the promise of the Father, the merit of the blood of Jesus, or the energy of the Divine Spirit; therefore our faith remains.

Beloved Friends, many more shakings may come. Romanism, which is a spurious reproduction of the materialism of Judaism, needs a shake to destroy it; Puseyism, an equally gross and carnal combination of the outward and visible with the inward and unseen, will also pass away when its hour comes, but the faith once delivered to the saints will outlive every change. The symbol is transient, the spiritual Truth of God is eternal. Over every form of material worship there shall be pronounced the sentence, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes," but the pure spiritual faith of Jesus Christ can never die; the blessed Doctrine that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and all those glorious Doctrines which cluster around the Cross of Christ shall survive "the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds." They shall not only remain, but remain in greater clearness, and in fuller power, because the things that could be shaken are taken away, for created things only dim the luster of the Cross, and are made by human sin a veil to hide the Redeemer's Glory. The more completely they are removed the more plainly shall we see the Cross of Christ in open vision. "They shall perish; but you remain; and they all shall wax old as does a garment; and as a

vesture shall you fold them up, and they shall be changed: but you are the same, and your years shall not fail."

II. We now turn the light of our text upon another subject. ALL THAT IS TRUE IN OUR PROFESSED CREEDS AND STANDARDS WILL STAND WHEN MERE OPINIONS ARE SHAKEN.

Some of us, though young, are old enough to recollect a great many theological panics; panics very nearly as foolish as that in Lombard Street; for there are other old ladies besides those who rush to the bank to draw out their deposits. It is not so very long ago that we had a certain "Rivulet" controversy; then came the noisier battle of the "Essays and Reviews," by-and-by a live bishop fired off an arithmetical cannon at Moses, and now all sorts of writers are hammering away at the "Life of Christ," and what may be next we cannot tell. When these attacks occur there is generally a very great alarm among timid Believers. They say, "What will happen now? People do not respect authority; they used to receive sound teaching because they were taught it. Now they want to know the reason of everything. Alas, Master, what shall we do?" It is true that men are beginning to raise very serious questions, and some which will not be answered today nor tomorrow. They want us to prove that the Bible is the Word of God instead of accepting it as such; the skepticism which questions everything is very rife and cannot be stifled, for it persists in putting its questions again and again, and saying, "No, I will never be quiet until I get an answer." Is there any real cause for fear in all this? Will the Truth of God, as it is in Jesus, suffer damage from these attacks?

My Brothers and Sisters, I believe that it has not suffered and will not sustain an injury, but, on the contrary, will be made the more triumphant. I cannot excuse or even make an apology for those who make these attacks upon the Word of God—to their own Master they stand or fall. Above all I cannot say a word in the defense of certain professed ministers of Christ, who only exercise their calling to undermine that which they profess to have been called to defend; but, Beloved, whoever may be the instruments, whether they are professed men of God or overt servants of the devil, I do not believe that controversial shakings can lead to the destruction of a single Truth of God, but to the bringing out of that which is true, and separating it from falsehood. During the Reformation period the pulpits resounded with the Doctrine of Justification by Faith and little else, and many heresies arose until attention was directed to other Truths equally necessary to edification, so that a more complete Gospel testimony was promoted. Just now the tug of war seems to gather around the Doctrine of Future

Punishment which I believe to be as certain as the Existence of God and the Inspiration of Holy Scripture. Struggle against it will only bring out that Truth of God more and more clearly, and will make the ministers of Christ thunder it out with greater certainty, and so, by God's Grace, sinners will be alarmed and driven to the Cross of Christ for comfort. Never be afraid, my Brothers and Sisters—the Truth of God will bear threshing and lose nothing but the husk which surrounded it! Fear not for the Truth of God because of the ability and education of its foes; the wisest man living is a fool when he fights against the Truth as it is in Jesus, and you will be a match for him when he is on the side of wrong. Do not give infidelity credit for a vast amount of sense and learning; it is only folly masking itself under the garb of philosophy, metaphysics, and outlandish jargon. If I cannot defend what I believe, I am afraid I shall begin to doubt it myself; and therefore, for my own sake, I will make myself master of the point, if possible; and if in the study of it I do not meet with an answer which may satisfy my opponent, if I meet with one which satisfies my own conscience, I shall be all the better and stronger a Christian for it, and so good will come out of evil. Shake away, Sir! Sift away! Not one grain of wheat will fall to the ground!

I stood this week by the side of a church which once was a considerable distance inland, but now it stands just by the ocean. Almost every year a great mass of the clay cliff falls into the sea, and in a year or two this parish church must fall. It stands now in quietude and peace, but on a certain day it will all be swallowed up into the sea, as certainly as the elements still work according to their ordinary laws. I could not help thinking that the edifice was a type of certain ecclesiastical bodies which stand upon the clay cliff of Statecraft, or superstition. The tide of public enlightenment, and above all the ocean tide of God's Spirit is advancing and wearing away their foundation till, at last, the whole fabric must go down. What then? Will you hold up your hands and cry, "The Church of God is gone?" Keep from the foolish utterance; God's Church is safe enough. Look yonder, there stands the Church of God upon a stormy ridge where the sea always dashes and perpetually rages on all sides, and yet she fears no undermining because she is built on no *clay* cliff, but on a Rock against which the waves of Hell shall not prevail. Then let your earth-born, State-propped churches go! Swallow them up, O sea of time, swallow them all up and leave no wreck behind! But the Church of the Living God shall stand all the more glorious because of the ruin which has overtaken her rivals and discovered their human origin.

I need not, however, enlarge, because you can all see it is so, if you look back in history; and you may rest assured that what was true a 100

years ago will be true now, and that the more there is of strife against the Gospel, the more the Gospel will prevail; therefore let us not fear, but rejoice confidently in our God.

III. The principle may be applied in a third direction: THE REAL IN OUTWARD PROFESSION STANDS, NOTWITHSTANDING TIMES OF SHAKING.

There are seasons when the professing Church undergoes fearful trials. She suffered in olden times the ordeal of *persecution*. Edicts and writs were issued forbidding all worship in the name of Jesus; cruel penalties were the reward of those who were faithful to the Doctrine of the Cross. The rough wind howled dreadfully; and the result was that the Church, which had been overgrown with hypocrisy, was speedily freed from pretenders; and only those remained whose faith could bear the fire. The Church was thus refined by persecution, and might have thanked her persecutors for having put her through the blessed process. Nowadays we are not so much subject to this test, but the world still hates us. It now *fawns* upon the Christian; it invites him to share her joys; and bids him be no longer rigid and strict. It offers him rich rewards and soft speeches, if he will but compromise a little, and not be too sternly pure and upright. What of this? Is it not the same purifying process? By all means let those who love the world go to it, and let those who value the world's pleasures have them. If it were possible for me to put a hedge all round this Church so that none of you should be tempted to enter the theater or enter into giddy company; if I could put a wall all round so that none of you should ever be tempted into the gin-palace or the playhouse, I should not dare to do it, for what would you then be? You would only cease from these things because you could not get at them; the taste for such vanities, if it is in your hearts, would be uncured.

If you were hypocrites you would not be so likely to be found out, if never tried; and those of you who are genuine would never grow into strong men, but remain Christian babies—nursed and dressed by others, not at all able to run alone. The blandishments of the world are only another form of that fan which is in Christ's hand, with which He purges the great visible heap lying upon the threshing-floor of His Church. When some of you fall into temptation, though we cannot but weep over *you*, yet we do not know but what your outwardly falling into temptation may only have discovered the rottenness and wickedness of your heart—and so we may be well rid of you. And you yourself, in the long run, may have your eyes opened to much secret evil which otherwise you would never have detected.

At certain times *discord* has marred our churches. Blessed be God we have not felt it here, but when it does come, I am not certain that that is altogether a matter of regret. There are parties and strife, and all this is sin, but when the Church is shaken, those who can be shaken will be shaken, and they will slide off, some this way, and some that; but those who cannot be shaken will stand fast in their integrity, and defend the faith once committed to the saints. There may also happen *great fallings into sin;* some who have been prominent in the Church may make shipwreck, and when this occurs, woe, indeed, is it to the whole community, and sorrow to every member; but still I am not certain but what there may be a gain even in the loss, for then those are discovered whose faith may have stood in the wisdom of man, who have been depending on human countenance, and not following holiness for its own sake—and others who have merely been led by associations and not by principle, are led to great searching of heart. I would sorrow in all cases of failure, but not as though I had no consolation, for, my Brothers and Sisters, those only are shaken that may *be* shaken; but those who are rooted and grounded in Christ, and are truly what they profess to be, will stand fast unto the end. That old oak in the forest is one of the noblest works of God. Look at it just now bursting into full leaf, bearing well its verdant honors, and making a picture worthy of the artist's rarest skill. What are these dry pieces of wood which strew the ground beneath it? What are these large branches which rot under its shade? It is needless to ask, for we all know that they fell from the tree during winter's storms. Is it a cause of regret for the sake of the tree that those rotten branches were broken off? It may be a lamentation as far as concerns the broken boughs, but the tree itself would never have been so healthy, and never looked so complete if the rotten branches had been allowed to abide. When the hurricane came howling through the woods, the old tree shivered in the gale, and mourned as it heard the cracking of its boughs, yet now it is thankful because the sound healthy branches with sap and life in them are all there, and the withered ones no longer encumber the trunk.

Summing this matter up in a word or two, I do not think times of storm to a Church are in the long run to be regretted—a calm is much more dangerous. The plague-bearing mist settles and festers in the vale till the atmosphere becomes deadly, even to the casual passenger; but the storm fiend, as men call him, leaps from the mountains into the sunny glades of the valley, and with terrific vigor hurls down the habitations of men and tears up the trees by the roots. But meanwhile all is superabundantly compensated by the effectual purging which the

atmosphere receives. Men breathe more freely and Heaven smiles more serenely now that the heaviness of the death-damp is gone, and the poisonous vapor clings no longer to the river's bank and the valley's side.

IV. We will further apply the principle to OUR OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

Beloved Friends, this principle, which is true without, is equally sure within. There will come to every sincere Christian a time of inward shaking, testing, and convulsion. We have included much in our experience which is not *real*; we think we know a great deal which is nothing better than boastful ignorance. How many times we have imbibed the conceit that we were becoming very humble, when we were never more proud than when we thought so! We have felt as if we were conquering all our besetting sins, and at that very moment Satan was laughing at us because we mistook a sleeping sin for a dead sin! We are puffed up with the fancy that we are rich and increased in goods, whereas all that we have put in at the front door has been stolen at the back door, and more. We have put our spiritual money into a bag that is full of holes; we have been heaping up that which is not bread, and spending our labor for that which profits not. The soul's conflict comes, and we are troubled because we do not care to be disturbed in our false peace; but ah, how much we need disturbing! I know some of you do not relish soul-searching sermons. When I give you one which acts like the refiner's fire, you can scarcely endure it; you want to have the soft pillows of the Promises of God laid under your head, and savory meat placed by your side; but searching sermons you wish to be few and far between. But these times of self-examination are fully as necessary as times of nourishing and comfort; and when they visit your inner man they are loaded with blessings, and are to be received with gratitude and thanksgiving.

Dear Friends, let me mention a few methods of soul-shaking. *Affliction* is one of them. The man thought that he had resigned everything to God—death came and took away his child; where was his resignation then? Perhaps it stood that trial; but lo, the Lord removes another—how now, good Sir? A second time—do you still bear it? Alas, the third shaft smites another beloved one; can you still, in all things, acknowledge His hand? Do you still stand to the surrender? You say, "Yes." May it prove so when the trials come! You said the other day, dear Friend, "I do not think I am worldly-minded; I hope my affection is set upon things above, and not on things on the earth." How have you found it during the last two or three feverish days? You sang the other day, as we sang this morning—

"Let mountains from their seats be hurled

Down to the deep, and buried there.
Convulsions shake the solid world—
Our faith shall never yield to fear."

How stood your faith on Friday when the banks suspended payment? Did you play the man or play the fool? When the great waters were let loose, was your ark seaworthy, or did it prove a poor leaky hulk? We have, I fear, much more resignation in name than in fact, and more faith in fancy than in reality. You think sometimes that now you really do love God with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and that nothing can come in to make you think harshly of Him. But will not a sharp blow from the rod alter your tune? Do you kiss the rod, or do you begin to kick like a willful child? Can you say with Job, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord"? Tribulations, losses, crosses, sicknesses, and bereavements are very stern trials, and the things within us which may be shaken will be shaken by them; but if we can bear them well and trustingly, and yet praise and bless God for all, we have evidence of possessing gracious qualities which cannot be shaken, and therefore will remain.

What a shake *temptation* gives us! We spoke of that last Sunday morning. (See Sermon #689, Volume 12—TEMPTATIONS ON THE PINNACLE—read/download, by God's Grace, all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons, and over 490 Spanish translations free of charge at www.spurgeongems.org.) How commonly is it the lot of God's people! Temptations will assail us of a sort that we never dreamed of. We are tempted to deny God, to doubt the Deity of Christ, to mistrust the Truth of Scripture; we are tempted to presumption, to every form of sin; and there are times when temptations follow each other so quickly that we do not know which way to look nor where to turn. We use the great shield of faith as best we can, but it seems to us if it could not avail us to ward off the innumerable darts. Ah, what shall we do *then?* Why, Brothers and Sisters, we shall then know whether our grace is the Divine Grace of God or the grace of man; we shall now see whether we have the faith of God's Elect or not! The faith of God's Elect can write *"Invicta"* upon its shield; it is unconquered and unconquerable; but the faith which springs from mere human reason will speedily give way like a pasteboard helmet, or a wooden sword. O sharp temptations; terrible as you are to me, yet I thank God for you, because the trial of my faith, which is much more precious than that of gold which perishes, though it is tried by fire, shall redound to the Glory of God and to my own comfort.

There is a time of shaking coming which none of us shall be able to avoid. If we could live without affliction and without temptation, which I think is impossible, yet we cannot enter into the Promised Land without

passing through the river of *death*, unless the Lord shall come. What a test will the hour of death be! Beloved Friends, certain professors cannot endure to have a suspicion raised concerning the sincerity, vitality, and power of their godliness. They say, "Why should the minister set me questioning myself as to whether I am saved or not? Is it not best for me to believe that I am saved, and so go on cheerfully till I die?" Beloved, may this tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth before I shall knowingly assist any of you in being comfortable in presumption. True faith can bear examination, and even courts it. The preaching which says to its hearer, "You are not to examine yourself, take it for granted that it is all well with you," is a preaching that comes from the bottomless Pit and does the devil's work—it is not a ministry which God has sent. If my faith will not bear human examination it will never bear God's examination; and if when I am in health I dare not sit down by the hour together to look over my soul's estate, what shall I do in the swellings of Jordan? If even now I am half afraid, what shall I be then? And if I dare not now look certain texts of Scripture in the face, but am obliged to forget that they are in the Bible in order to be at peace in my own heart, oh, what shall I do when those texts will force themselves upon me, and will not take my indifference for an answer, but will demand of my conscience that it should feel their power?

Let me beseech you while you rest simply and alone upon Christ, be sure that you rest sincerely and with your whole heart upon Him. Do not make mistakes about your soul's eternal matters, for mistakes here will be fatal; be built upon the Rock, and be surely built on it; do not be afraid of being shaken now, because you must be shaken before long. That silent chamber must be inhabited by you, and on that bed you must be stretched. You will hear the warning voice of Death in the silent tread of those who expect your departure, and in the faint whisper of the physician as he warns your friends that there is no hope. You will be compelled to gaze into worlds unknown; you will hear the booming of the deep sea of eternity; and oh, if a fear should molest you, then how dark will your descent be into the valley! But oh, Beloved, if you can be confident then, with what joy will you face your last hour, and with what triumph enter into eternity! How can you expect to be confident *then* if you are self-indulgent *now*, and will not dare to try your estate? Come, have a friendly suit, as it were, in the heavenly chancery between your soul and your hopes today, lest there should be a fatal suit against you—a suit brought on by Divine Justice—which shall end in your total bankruptcy throughout eternity. God grant that we may not be afraid of

being shaken, for if we cannot bear shaking now, what shall we do at the last?

What has been the result of all the shaking through which we have passed up to now? I think it has been this—we have had a great deal removed from us which was of no use to us. We could boast once rather more loudly than we dare to do now. I must confess that the longer I live, the more of a fool I feel myself to be. I am in myself weaker, more distrustful, more conscious of sin, more hopeless of self-assistance than ever. The more strength I get from God the weaker I discover myself to be in and of myself. There were a few things that I thought I knew once, but except those things which God has taught me, I now find that I know nothing. I suppose that the further we proceed in the way to Heaven the more we shall be dissatisfied with ourselves, because our daily trials and troubles have the effect of bursting many of those bubbles in which we once put our confidence. All the wooden centers must be taken away from our masonry, for God builds His arches so that they will stand without supporting frameworks. The dog shores must all be knocked away from our ship, for it is not meant to be high and dry on the shore; it is to be launched upon a sea of Everlasting Glory. The dross is consuming; blessed be God for that, for the precious metal gains by the loss. Our outward man decays, but the inward man is renewed day by day. Go on, Great Shaker of Heaven and Earth, and shake from me my mere pretensions, my presumptions, and empty professions, for the genuine work of Grace will be helped!

V. I must now bring before you ALL THAT YOU HAVE IN POSSESSION. The things which can be shaken will be removed, but things that cannot be shaken will remain. We have many things in our possession at the present moment which can be shaken, and it ill becomes a Christian to set much store by them. The poorest man among us has many Providential blessings for which to be grateful this morning, but the richest among us has nothing earthly upon which he can depend. Wife and children make glad our hearth; we have a little place which may be very homely, but it is our home and we love it. Some of you are prospering and thriving traders, others are merchants who have almost accumulated a competency; be grateful for all this, but do not forget that these are things which may be shaken. The cheek of the wife may grow pale, the lustrous eyes of the little ones may soon become dim, the house may be left a heap of ashes, the property may take to itself wings and fly away—there is nothing stable beneath these rolling skies—change is written upon all things.

Yet, my Brothers and Sisters, some of us have certain "things which cannot be shaken," and I invite you, this morning, to read over the catalog of them, that if the things which can be shaken should all be taken away, you may derive real comfort from the things that cannot be shaken, and will remain. In the first place, whatever your losses may have been, you enjoy *present salvation.* You are this morning standing at the foot of His Cross, trusting alone in the merit of Jesus' precious blood, and no rise or fall of the markets can interfere with your salvation in Him; no breaking of banks, no run upon your credit, can touch that. A sinner saved! I remember the time when I thought that if I had to live on bread and water all my life, and to be chained in a dungeon all my days, I would cheerfully submit to that if I might but get rid of my sins; when sin haunted and burdened my spirit, I am sure I would have counted the martyr's death to be preferable to a life under the lash of a guilty conscience. Now, your sins are all gone, there is not one left in God's book; through Jesus' blood you are clean, and that is a comfort which cannot be removed—

"Once in Christ, in Christ forever;
Nothing from His love can sever."

In the next place, you are *a child of God* today. God is your Father. No change of circumstances can ever rob you of that. If you were a peer of the realm you might be degraded; if you have walked among the rich you might be thrust out from their society; father and mother might forsake you but you can never lose this joyous fact, that you are an heir of God, joint-heir with Jesus Christ! Coming out of losses and poverty, stripped bare, you can say, "He is my Father still. Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return—but to my *Father* shall I return, and in my Father's house are many mansions; therefore I will not be troubled." You have this day another permanent blessing, namely, *the love of Jesus Christ.* He who is God and Man loves you with all the strength of His affectionate Nature. Now, nothing can rob you of that. You can look to the Cross, and know that He who died on it died for you; and He who reigns in Heaven reigns for you and pleads for you. No catastrophes can deprive you of that. Austria and Prussia may go to war, if they please, and Italy or France may join in the turmoil; blood may flow like water; established rule may be shaken by revolution, and a fierce mob may ride roughshod over the world, but these things shake not the fact that Jesus loves you: "My beloved is mine, and I am His." Cattle plagues may come, and mildews may blast the rising corn, but though the fig tree may not blossom, and the flocks may cease from the field, and the herds from the stall, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, for Jesus loves me still; Jesus is still faithful; Jesus is still true.

Beloved, you have another thing, namely this Truth of God, that *whatever may happen to you, you have God's faithful promise, which holds true, that all things shall work for your good.* Do you believe this? You need it just now, and therefore let me recall it to your recollection. It is true that you cannot see the good in the trouble itself, but it works for good. Sometimes deadly poisons may be antidotes against other poisons, and the worst afflictions may be antidotes against far worse ones. The ship rocks! What a wave was that! What a sea the vessel shipped! She rocks again, the sails fly to ribbons. How the yards are snapping! The masts will go by the board! The frail ship will be wrecked! The danger is imminent, she must be wrecked! The rocks are ahead, and she must be dashed upon them! Not so, you passenger in the ship of Providence, not so! Do you see who it is that is at the helm, and do you not know that He who steers the ship also wings the winds, and gives force to the waves? God is not the God of the vessel only, but also of the stormy sea. Therefore go where you may be quiet, take yourself to the hind part of the ship near to the Steersman, and go to sleep in peace. It is the best thing you can do, for the ship is safe—

"Though winds and waves assault her keel,
He does preserve it, He does steer,
Even when the boat seems most to reel,
Storms are the triumph of His art.
He will not close His eyes, nor yet His heart."

Once more, if everything should melt away, yet you have *"a city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."* Sometimes foreign princes, when they have been afraid of a revolution, have invested all their money in the English funds, and then they have said, "Now come what may, my prosperity is safe." Ah, well, it is a blessed thing to invest all your wealth in the heavenly funds, and then let the earth go to ruin—our treasure is safe. Let the world, like an old water-logged hulk, go down if she will—it is a wonder that she keeps afloat so long—let her go, I am in the lifeboat which can never sink! And I shall soon be on shore where tempests cannot blow. Oh, to rest in assured hope, the hope that makes not ashamed, the hope that shall never be confounded, the hope that when days and years are passed, we shall see the face of Jesus and dwell with Him forever! Courage, Brothers and Sisters—our best portion and richest heritage remains, and cannot be moved. Rejoice in this, and be of good cheer this day.

Ah, but there are some of you who have only what may be moved, and you are therefore sure to lose your all. Go away and mourn and lament. Better still, go to the Cross, stand under the foot of it, and you cannot be

shaken there. Look up to the flowing of the Savior's blood, and trust Him, for nothing can ever shake you then.

As for those of us who possess the things which cannot be shaken, let us stand fast and be of good courage. Whatever may happen during this week, let us play the man, let us show that we are not such little children as to be cast down by what may happen in this poor fleeting state of time. Our country is Immanuel's land, our hope is above the sky, and therefore calm as the summer's ocean, we will see the wreck of everything and yet rejoice in the God of our salvation.

The Lord fill us with His peace for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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AN IMMOVABLE FOUNDATION
NO. 691

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 13, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"
Psalm 11:3.

WE are walking along through the vineyard of this Psalm, plucking the clusters on the right hand, and on the left, when suddenly, with a tremendous roar, the "if" of our text, like a young lion, leaps out upon us. What shall we do with it? Let us play the man, like Samson, and rend it as though it were a kid, and doubtless we shall find honey in it, and shall have again to put forth our riddle, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." These "ifs" are terrible lions, but when Divine Grace enables us to slay them, they become good storehouses for sweetness. As the children of Israel spoiled the Egyptians, and made themselves rich from the spoils of their oppressors, both when they left Egypt, and after the passage of the Red Sea, so let us gather riches of comfort and arms for future warfare from this "if" which threatens to enthrall the mind of the Christian, and hold him in the chains of fear and doubt. It comes to us as a keen shaft from the camp of the foe, but by the Grace of God we will fit it to our string, and with the arms of faith shoot it back again, and may God in mercy guide it to the joints of some foeman's harness. This "if" may have a bitter taste at first, but I am persuaded that it will have a wholesome effect upon us to use it, yes, it will yield some spiritual sustenance to our souls. We will welcome its searching and shaking power now, as it will only tend to prepare us for the time when the four winds may come upon our house, and the blast of the Terrible One is as a storm against the wall. If we use this giant battering ram "if" now, it will show us our weakness and our strength, so that we may correct the one, and rejoice over the other.

We shall take this "if" in two ways. First, we shall consider it *as an "if" which is nothing but an "if."* And secondly, we shall consider it as *an "if" which is a great deal more than an "if."*

I. We shall first CONSIDER THIS "IF" AS BEING NOTHING BUT AN "IF."

"If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do?" My Brothers and Sisters, there are certain spiritual foundations which God has laid in Zion which can never be removed; there are certain foundations against which the gates of Hell cannot prevail, which time cannot shake, and which eternity will only confirm. If we venture to speak of these foundations being removed, it can only be in hypothetical terms, and with the word "if," for there must always be in our souls the conviction that the foundations of God stand sure.

I will mention a few of these foundation-things which we know cannot be removed, but we will ask the question, if they should be removed, what then?

First we will take the *Foundation-Book*. This Word of God, this Revelation of Himself which He has made to us by Prophets, and by Seers, by Apostles, and by Evangelists, and by His own dear Son. This Book we believe to be true even in its jots and tittles. Whatever form of thought we may adopt as to the method of Inspiration, we believe this Book to be Inspired throughout, and we accept all its utterances as the teachings of the Most High. From the first Word of it to the last, we give our "unfeigned assent and consent" to it, as being nothing less and nothing more than the Word of Jehovah, the Lord our God. But if it should not be so, what can the righteous do then? If, after all, the attacks of modern skeptics should have some force in them; if they can dislodge part of the Word of God from its sure resting place; if first one stone shall topple from the summit of the battlements, and then another shall be loosened from the embankment, and by-and-by its enemies should come to work with their great bars upon the very lowest and most valuable stones in the wall—what then? What if the Book should be a delusion? What if it should be false? Ah, then, my Brothers and Sisters, what can the righteous do? Oh, it had been better for us that we had never been born, than that the Bible should not be true, for here is the only balm that heals the wounds that sin has made, here is the only bread that satisfies the hungering of our spirits. If that is not true, O God, why did You create us, and why did You allow such a Book as that to come across our path to mock us, supplying, as it does, all that hope can desire, and all that our deepest interests can crave after?

Oh, cruel God, to permit so sweet a dream to charm us even for a while, if it is not true! But oh, Beloved, we come back with a sacred recoil to this—it is true; it must be true, and if for no other reason because it so suits the craving of our inward consciousness, because it so uplifts us out of the natural beggary and meanness of our condition, and puts us on such a heavenly footing, makes us commune with the Most High, and fills us with such rapt and heavenly thoughts! It must be true, or else what could we do? Cling, then, to the Divine Authority of the Scriptures with a death grip! Let those give up the Inspiration of the Bible who can afford to do so, but you and I cannot. Let those cast away the sure promise of God who have got something else to comfort them, who can go to their philosophy, or turn to their self-conceit, but as for you and for me, it is a desperate matter for us if this Book is not true, and therefore let us be ready to defend it at all costs, and if need be, to die for it, for oh, Brothers and Sisters, it were better to die, this Book being true, than to live, this Book being false. It were better for us that all the miseries of this life should fall upon us, this Book being an unmoved foundation, than for all the joys of life to be ours if this Book is once taken away. Clasp it to your heart; enfold it in your bosom; hold it as the very core of your life's comfort, and the very strength of your existence. Remember

that if this is removed there is nothing for the righteous to do but despair and die. I hope we shall always sing—

"Should all the forms which men devise
Assault my soul with treacherous art,
I'll call them vanity and lies,
And bind this Bible to my heart."

But now we turn from the Foundation-Book to *the Foundation-Doctrine.* What is the Foundation-Doctrine? I shall not shock any one of you if I say that it is admitted by all evangelical Christians that the standing or falling in the Church is that of Justification by Faith. The Church which holds that Doctrine is in the body; the church which is tampering with that Doctrine is not in the body. I will not merely say the church that is not holding it, but the church that is not holding it in the most distinct form is not to be acknowledged as a part of the body of Christ. Justification by Faith alone is such a Truth of God that it must not be hidden, and to obscure those words, legible in their own light—"Believe and live"—is to commit high treason against the Majesty of God, and to make one's self an outlaw from God and from mercy.

The great standing or falling Doctrine, then, is this—"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "Therefore we are justified by faith, and not by the works of the Law." We hold that it is of faith that it might be of Divine Grace through Christ Jesus. Holding this Truth of God, that every soul who believes in Christ is thereby made a partaker of the merit of His Passion and is saved, what joy and peace are opened up to us! Some of us live in a sense of pardon. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, this is a river to swim in, when we can sing—

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

Oh, the blessedness—as Ainsworth translates it—"The heaped-up blessedness of the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." Oh, the blessedness of being justified by faith, and of possessing peace with God! But if that is removed, what can the righteous do? My Brothers and Sisters, the righteous can do nothing; they can do nothing, and they must at once give up their peace, give up their joy, give up their hopes, and then give up existence altogether. This one thing I know, though I have preached my Master's Gospel with perpetual industry, and have sought to honor Him, yet I have no more hope of Heaven apart from the merits of Christ than the greatest criminal that is banished from his country for his crimes; and that poor wretch who was, till lately, under sentence of death for many murders, would have as good a hope of entering into Eternal Life as the best among you, were it not for this precious Doctrine—that is to say, she would have no hope, and you would have no hope, either, for we are all alike shut up under condemnation. Good or bad, righteous or unrighteous, we are all alike condemned under the Law of God, and there would be no more hope for one than for another if this Doctrine of Salvation by Faith in Christ were not true. We are all in this one boat together—I mean as

many of us as have believed; the weakest cannot sink unless the ship goes down, and the strongest cannot float unless the ship should bear them.

If this foundation were removed, I will ask you gray-haired saint, hoary with many years of service, what could you do? You bow your head and say, "Alas, my master, what could I do but die in despair?" I would ask the bravest of Christ's Apostles, the most earnest and indefatigable of the servants of the living God, what could they do if salvation was not the result of faith in Christ, and they would reply unanimously, "We were of all men the most miserable if our only hope were gone!" But oh, Brothers and Sisters, we will come back to this, that it is by faith in the blood of Jesus that we are saved. For this Doctrine let us be prepared to bear any reproach, and for the spread of this Doctrine let us make any exertions. Let us publish it to every wind; let us invoke the help of every wave to bear it abroad! My Brothers and Sisters, help those of us who are engaged in telling out this precious Truth of Salvation by Faith, and then proclaim it far and wide yourselves. Distribute it in a printed form; speak of it with your warm and loving lips; tell it, tell it the wide world over, that there is a foundation already laid in Zion, a cornerstone elect and precious, and that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the righteous!" Proclaim that "whoever believes in Him is not condemned."

We will now go a step further. We have had the Foundation-Book and the Foundation-Doctrine, and now we come to the *foundation-fact*. The fact upon which our faith rests is this, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." The great fact on which genuine faith rests is this, that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and that having taken upon Himself the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of man, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, for us. The great Truth which makes the Gospel worth proclaiming is the Truth that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," that Christ also has suffered for sin, "the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God," "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "For the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." In one word, the great fact on which the Christian's hope rests is *Substitution*. The vicarious Sacrifice of Christ for the sinner, Christ suffering for the sinner, Christ's being made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, Christ offering up a true and proper expiatory and substitutionary sacrifice in the place of as many as the Father gave Him, who are recognized by their trusting in Him—this is the cardinal fact of the Gospel. Now, if this is true, what will we not do? Do? Why, we will sing of Christ in time, and sing of Him in eternity! We will sit at the foot of His Cross and—

"View the flowing
Of the Savior's precious blood;
With Divine Assurance knowing
He has made our peace with God."

We will praise Him when we get to Heaven, and sing, "Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood." But—oh, horrible "but"—if this is not true, if God was never Incarnate, if God never did in the Person of His Son Jesus bleed and die, if no Atonement was ever made for human guilt, then howl because of it! Let each man put his hands upon his loins as a woman in childbirth, and let sorrow pierce the heart of every child of Adam, for sin must be punished, and if it was never punished in Christ, it must be punished upon each one of us. Wrath, and a certain terrible looking for judgment and fiery indignation—these are all that await us. "As when a man wipes a dish and turns it," said the Prophet, even so will it be with us—wiped out and turned upside down if it were not true that Christ died. As when the potter with a rod of iron breaks the vessel into shivers, so should we, too, be broken into shivers with each particle to be full of pain and covered with grief, if it were not that Jesus died. Oh, if this Foundation were removed, what could we do? But it cannot be removed! We know it; we rest on it; we trust in it, and our joy is to hold it, to understand and to study it, to be actuated and moved by it in every part of our life and conversation, but if it were removed what could the righteous do? There is just now, and there has been for many years, a direct attack made upon the Doctrine of the Atonement. Men cannot bear Substitution. They gnash their teeth at the thought of the Lamb of God bearing the sin of man. Ah, but we will proclaim it in defiance of them, and hurl it in their teeth; we will neither dilute it, nor change it, nor fritter it away in any shape or fashion. It shall still be Christ a positive Substitute, bearing human guilt, and suffering in the place of men, for if this is not so what could we do? We cannot, dare not give it up, for it is our life!

I have thus given you three matters, and now just a word upon another point, namely—the *foundation-work*. The blood of Jesus, Brothers and Sisters, must be applied by the Spirit of Divine Grace, and the foundation of our inward confidence must be in the work of Grace in our own souls. Now, the foundation in us was laid in repentance, and in faith in Christ, and we have gone on to build thereon, much I am afraid, of wood, hay, and stubble, but still, something of gold, and silver, and precious stones. Now, if the Grace of God could cease to work, if the Eternal Love of Jehovah could be removed, and if the effectual might of the Holy Spirit's arm could be withdrawn, what could you and I do? Would it not be as hard to get to Heaven by the Gospel as by the Law if it were not for the work of Grace in us? Brothers and Sisters, Calvary is no nearer to Heaven than Sinai, if the Spirit of Grace works not in us. If Christ is not crucified in us, His being crucified for us will be of no avail; we must have Christ formed in us the hope of Glory. Now, what do you say, Brothers and Sisters? Suppose this foundation-work were all removed—what could you do? Do? Why the brightest of you would become as smoking flax without light; you who are pure as crystal now in your daily life, would become like a polluted stream; you who now are the delight and joy of the Church of God, would be as reprobate silver cast

out, or as salt that has lost its savor, and is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill.

We must always keep in mind that we are only channels for Divine Grace, we are not even pools and reservoirs, we must have a continual supply of Divine Gifts. We must have an abiding union with the Fountain of all good, or we would soon run dry, and only as fresh streams flow into us are we kept from becoming mere dry beds of sand and mire, but we *know* that He will never fail us. This spring is high up in Heaven near the Eternal Throne, and it ripples down through the means of Grace from the God of all Grace, and we receive daily of His fullness Grace for Grace. Joyful Truth of God for us, that because He lives we must live also! Till Jesus bows His head in death, we, the living members of His mystic body, can never droop or fail. His might is our strength, His resources our never failing supply. And we, through His Spirit, are daily tended and sustained—

"Oh! To Grace, how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be!"

Were that Grace once gone what should I do? Hold fast, then, to that which you have received, that no man take your crown. Cling to the Doctrine of the Work of the Spirit with a death grip! Never give it up. Having begun in the Spirit, do not seek to be made perfect in the flesh. Do not look to excitement; do not let your faith stand in the wisdom or the speech of man, but in the power of God, and in the invincible might and majesty of the Holy Spirit; for if you go anywhere else, the Foundation will be removed, and then what can you do? O God, You have begun the good work and You will carry it on, and perfect it unto the day of Christ. This Foundation shall not be removed.

Once more, there is also a *foundation-hope*. Something which we may, I think, call a foundation, since our joy and our peace very much depend upon it. You and I possess tonight, dear Friends, a hope which is sometimes called "a blessed hope," and at another time, "a good hope." It is a hope partly that Christ may come, and a hope that when He comes, "we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." It is a hope that whether He comes in our lifetime or not, yet, if we fall asleep, we shall sleep in Jesus. We have a hope that sometimes bursts out into a song, and then we tune it in warbling such as this—

"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie."

Or sometimes it is—

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

Or, perhaps it is—

"Jerusalem the golden,
With milk and honey blest;
Beneath your contemplation
Sink heart and soul oppressed;

We know not, oh, we know not,
What joys await us there!
What radiance of Glory,
What bliss beyond compare."

At any rate, whatever notes we may use to warble out the hope, the hope is still the same—

"It is the hope, the blissful hope,
Which Jesus' Grace has given
The hope when days and years are past,
We all shall meet in Heaven."

Now, if that were removed, what could we do?—

"What is there here that I should wait?
My hope's alone in You;
When will You open Glory's gate,
And take me up to You?"

"Whom have I in Heaven but You? There is none upon earth that I desire besides You." Take Heaven away, and the world to come, and what a dreary desert, what blackness and darkness, what a gulf of mad despair it would speedily become! But, oh, Brothers and Sisters, that foundation cannot be removed! Because He lives, we shall live also. "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory." That hope abides sure and steadfast! Let us think of it more than we do. Let us plume our wings of flight every now and then. Come, you birds of Heaven, you eaglets of God—how is it that you keep below upon the earth as though you had no wings? Come, plume your callow pinions and begin to fly. The clouds are your atmosphere; beyond there is the blue sky where all is fair and clear. Up with you! Up, nearer to God, nearer to Eternity, nearer to your home, nearer to your everlasting mansion. Remember that you—

"Nightly pitch your moving tent
A day's march nearer home,"

and let the thought that you shall soon be—

"Forever with the Lord"

come over your hearts, and sweep like the touch of some master harpist's hand as he sweeps the ten-stringed instrument, and wakes it up to thunders of sacred melody. Be glad in the Lord, you righteous, and shout for joy, you upright in heart; for this foundation cannot be removed, and you need not fear.

II. And now we change our note for a few minutes. Let us TAKE THIS "IF" AS BEING SOMETHING MORE THAN AN "IF."

The foundations may be removed, not the spiritual foundations at all, but the temporal foundations. The foundations of civil government, the foundations of commerce, the foundations of one's estates, the foundations of trust between man and man, these may be removed; they have been grievously and terribly shaken during the last few days. War may arise. There seem to be many indications of a coming tempest, and when the eagles are gathered together to the prey, the fight will probably thicken, and instead of a few combatants, it may be that there will be a multitude of nations engaged in a terrible slaughter, and the foundations of the various kingdoms of Europe may be removed. Revolution, too, may

come. We remember 1848, and some of you, perhaps, are old enough to go farther back than that, to dates when revolutions were the order of the day. There are some who are always putting on their blue spectacles, and who can see very wonderful revolutions here. May their heads never ache before their predictions come to pass, but still these things may occur, for men are men, and if they should, what then? If the foundations should be removed, what would the righteous do? A panic has come, and man does not trust his fellow man, but plays the fool, the wild lunatic in the street, destroying commerce for the sake of commerce, and to get gain himself destroying the tree that bears the fruit.

I suppose no greater proof of folly could have been known in the 19th Century than might have been seen last Friday in Lombard Street. If anyone had whistled for a thousand fools, he need not have traveled a thousand yards, but might have found them on the spot. Now, if there should be such a thing, there may be ground for all this fear, for the foundations of human things are not made by God; they are only man's management, and consequently they may be shaken, but what then? I am going to suppose the very worst; that the social fabric is rocking like the walls of old Jericho, and that the very foundations are falling; I will even suppose that the cornerstone is being removed. What then? What can the righteous do?

Well, he can do as well as another man, and he can do a great deal better. Let me tell you what he can do. The first thing he can do, if the worst comes to the worst, is that *he can bear it with a holy equanimity*. He can say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." If the ship is wrecked, his treasure is not aboard it. He knows that if the banks should break, he will only part with some of his odd spending money but his true treasure is up there—not in an iron chest where the burglar can break through, but—

"Hid with Christ in God
Beyond the reach of harm,"

so that if the worst comes, he can still fold his arms and say, "It is written, 'I will never leave and never forsake you,' and so long as I have bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so long will I bless the name of the Lord Most High from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same." Now, dear Friends, prove this if it should happen to you. Do not do as the worldling does, who puts his hand to his fevered brow and says, "I am a ruined man," you cannot be a ruined man. Do not say, "I have lost my all," you cannot lose your all; your all is Christ, and Christ is not to be lost. Just accept the blow; kiss the rod; touch the hand that smites, and say, "Blessed be You, my Father, for it is the Lord."

Then the Christian not only bears the worst patiently; but the next thing he can do is *to hope for the best cheerfully*. I think if there is any man who can see clearest, even a spot of blue sky, it should be the Christian. "Oh," he says, "things are not what they seem; the dark cloud has a silver lining; light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." It is very much in the struggle of life to keep a brave heart; and you, Christian, have many arguments for doing so. Why bow

your head at yonder crested billow as though you should be drowned by it? O Man, it will only wash your face; it is all that it will do for you, and you shall lift your brow, when the spray has cleared it, towards Heaven, and shall see your God the better because the dirt is washed out of your eyes. Therefore, look cheerfully for something bright in the midst of the darkness; out of all this apparent loss, God can bring for you true gain in spiritual things. You may part with things temporal with equanimity, if they are likely to be restored to you transmuted by God's alchemy into things spiritual and eternal. If God takes away from His people, He can restore again, as in the case of Job, twice as much as they had before, even in worldly goods, and with these a gracious work of His Spirit in the heart, which is more to be desired than gold, yes, than much fine gold. Adam was laid asleep, and God took a rib and made it into a helpmeet for him. If God shall take anything from you, yes, though it lies near your heart, do not mourn as one that has no hope; in patience possess your soul, rest on the Lord, for He will bring it to pass that out of all this shall come a spiritual power which, in later days shall gladden your heart, and make you the joyful parent of much good to others in this world of sin and woe. Christ became poor that He might make many rich, and in His poverty He was as a lamb before its shearers dumb, and opened not His mouth. His prayer was, "not My will, O Father, but Yours be done." So may we hold our peace, if God has done it, never charge God foolishly, but say, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

If the foundations are removed what can the righteous do? Why, they can do one thing—*they can do the right.* They cannot guarantee results, but they can do the right. They cannot tell whether they shall fail in business or not, but they can be upright. They cannot tell whether the fall of this house, or the crash of that bank may injure them, but they can tell that they will have clean hands, and come out of it all with a spotless character; and when everything is lost there is but little lost if honor still remains, and if, by Divine Grace, integrity is still preserved. He who wears the herb hearts-ease in his bosom is richer than he who can wear diamonds upon his fingers, if those fingers are stained with guilt. It is comparatively easy to be correct and upright when these things pay, when we can, by them secure the esteem of our fellow men, and that confidence which is as good as money to a man in business, because of the credit it brings with it. But it is quite another thing to do the right when it means to strip oneself of all, and to give up long-loved and cherished possessions, hopes, and prospects, both for ourselves and family. This is the hour of temptation when Satan comes with his glory and wealth in one hand, and a suggestion of evil in the other, and bids us open our lap to receive them, reminding us that to deny him is to close with injury and loss to reputation, to our business, and to our loved families at home. How many have made the dread compact with the Prince of Darkness! They have gained the world but lost their soul. They have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage, and bartered Heaven for Hell; time has been taken and eternity rejected. The honor of

men has been esteemed more than the praise of God; they have grasped the gold and it has been a millstone round their neck, and into the deepest depths of woe it has dragged them. Lost! Lost! Lost forever! Oh, that men were wise, that they would remember this, that they would consider their latter end; for what can a man give in exchange for his soul? Come what may, trust in God and do the right.

There is another thing we can do if the foundations are removed, namely, *if we have a hand to spare we will help a comrade up.* If the foundations are removed and there is a common calamity, when others are selfish the Christian will hear his Savior's words—"You shall love your neighbor as yourself." "Well," he says, "it is a time of general suffering, and when a boat is at sea with a few survivors from a wreck, no man hoards his biscuit, no man keeps that little drop of pure fresh water wholly to himself, but like a generous man he divides his biscuit with his fellow sufferers, and drinks his drop with the rest." So will the righteous do. When things are bad they will say, "Now is the time for me to exhibit some degree of generosity." I like the action of a man who was once waited upon for a subscription, and contrary to expectation, gave the minister who asked him a very large check—I think it was 100 pounds. The minister was about to retire when the merchant, happening to open one of his letters, found that he had lost a vessel worth from 10,000 to 20,000 pounds. He called the minister and said, "You must give me back that check, I have just opened a letter and found that I have been a very great loser." The poor country minister, whose chapel was in a very bad plight, looked very blank about the matter, but the merchant said, "I find my money is going fast; I suppose I have not made good use of it, and so the Master has taken it away, but I will save some of it anyhow." And he wrote out another check for 500 pounds. Now, this was a right way of acting—provided, of course, the money was his own—for no man has a right to give away other people's property; but if it were his own, this was the true and wise pathway to choose to make some of it safe—a much better plan than when my lord comes fresh from his bank with his money in his hand, and says, "Go and do likewise, my brave fellows! Get your money out like this!" And then finds five minutes afterwards that somebody else has his money without giving him a receipt for the deposit, or anything of the kind—for it has gone into the hands of a pickpocket who is not so much to be blamed, perhaps, in such cases as he might have been in some others. Now, I can recommend to you when things are going bad, to make good investments. "Give a portion to seven and also to eight, for you know not what evil may be upon the earth." "Make unto yourselves friends of the mammon of righteousness, that when you fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

Once again. There is something more which the righteous man can do if the foundations are removed, and that is, *he can trust in God that it will be well in the end.* The worldling says, "It will be all the same a hundred years from now." The Christian says, "I do not want to look as far ahead as that. It is all right now." But the wind blows! "It is all right." But the

waves dash! "It is all right." But all the sails are reefed! "It is all right!" But the ship flies before the wind! "It is all right." But there are rocks ahead! "It is all right." Why? "Because He who is at the helm knows all about it; He created both wind and wave, and He knows how to cope with the storm. I cannot see that it is right, but I know that it is, and I walk by faith, and not by sight." Oh, Christian, this is what you can do. If the foundations are removed, you can bring faith into heavenly exercise, and you can sail against the wind. The night may be dark and dreary, but it will usher in the brighter morn, and merrily will the celestial music and songs greet his ears as the fresh dawning light triumphs over the fleeing darkness, and spreads itself till it bathes with its splendor all things which were even in the darkness working together for the good of God's people. Yes, the rough March winds and the dreary April showers were all fulfilling their task then, and now we can see it and rejoice in it as well as in their result. We will sing in our dungeon with Paul and Silas, for all is well now as it will be hereafter in Heaven. It is only in degree and realization that earth's joys differ from Heaven's to the true Believer in Christ.

Lastly, if the foundations are removed, *the righteous can commune with Christ therein.* We would never have such fellowship with Jesus as we do if we had not such troubles as we have. You cannot see the stars in the daytime, but they tell us that if you go down into a well you can. Sometimes God sinks wells of trouble and puts His servants into them, and then they see His starry promises. You might hunt in vain for glowworms by day, but they shall all be seen at night, and so shall the comfortable words and thoughts of Holy Scripture. The fireflies shall flash best at night when the sunlight is gone, and so oftentimes the light of the promise is better seen in the night of trouble than in the day of outward prosperity. The black foils of trouble shall bring out the brighter jewel of Divine Grace. You cannot know Christ except by following in His footsteps. Poverty will reveal Him who for our sakes became poor; sickness will show Him whose visage was more marred than any man's; shame will teach you His shame, and suffering will reveal to you His suffering, and even death itself, which shall remove the foundations, shall give you conformity to His death that you may have part in His Resurrection. Courage then, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and to the question, "If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do?" give this answer, "We can do as the righteous ought to do; we can do as God enables us to do." Let us go and show the world what that will be, and let the superiority of our faith and of our religion reveal itself in our times of darkness and in our hours of suffering.

I have been thinking all the while I have been thus talking that this text has an application to those who are not righteous, because if the righteous cannot do anything if the Grace of God fails, then what can the wicked do? They can do nothing, but then they can do as much as the righteous, who can do nothing either; and so here is comfort for the very worst, and for those who feel themselves to be farthest from God. As long as the foundation stands there is hope for every soul that believes, and

though you are the worst of the worst, yet if you trust Christ there is hope for you; though there would not be any if the foundations were removed, even if you were the best of the best. Come, then, needy Sinner! Come, though years of sin have heaped up their iniquities upon you. Come to Jesus—He can cleanse you. Trust Him, trust Him! Trust Him now, and you are saved and shall be His in the day of His appearing! Build on this foundation; Christ Jesus died for the ungodly; Trust Him to save you, and when the floods arise, and the rain descends, and the winds blow, your house shall never fall because it is built upon a Rock, a Foundation that can never be removed. I would that some here tonight would learn to leave the treacherous path of sin, and seek an interest in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know that the road you tread is undermined, and that sooner or later you will fall through, and sink on, on, on through the grave into the pit of Hell which has no bottom, the lake which burns with fire and brimstone? Turn! Turn! Why will you die? There is a sure Foundation which cannot move—on which you may build and never fear an overthrow. Come, then, with all your load of guilt, and rest at once and forever on Him who says, Come unto Me, and he who comes I will in nowise cast out. Heaven and earth may pass, but He will save to the uttermost all who come by faith to Him.

God bless these remarks to you according to His will, for Jesus' sake. Amen.—

"Yes! He is mine! And nothing of earthly things,
Not all the charms of pleasure, wealth, or power,
The fame of heroes, or the pomp of kings
Could tempt me to forego His love an hour!
'Go, worthless world,' I cry, 'with all that's yours;
Go I to my Savior's am, and He is mine.'
Whatever may change, in Him no change is seen,
A glorious sun that wanes not, nor declines;
Above the clouds and storms He walks unseen,
And sweetly on His people's darkness shines:
All may depart—I fret not, nor repine,
While I my Savior's am, and He is mine.

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JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING
NO. 692

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 20, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Joy and peace in believing."
Romans 15:13.

I WOULD address myself this morning to a special class, and if there should be no spiritual instruction for others, I trust that they will follow what is said with their prayers, that the word may be useful to those for whom it is mainly intended. There are a large number of persons who profess to have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, but who assert that they have no joy and peace in believing. They do not make this profession by union with the Christian Church or in any open manner, but when they are pushed upon the matter of personal salvation, they will sometimes tell us, "I do believe in Christ, but still I am so unhappy, I am so miserable, that I cannot believe that I am saved." That statement being tantamount to this—that the Word of God declares that whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned—but they assert that they have believed in Jesus, and nevertheless they are haunted with fears of condemnation which lead them to believe that they cannot have been delivered from the wrath to come. Now, I shall suppose that the persons whom I am trying to address this morning are sincerely anxious to be saved, and that they are not raising this difficulty by way of quibbling; because if they are quibblers, I shall not attempt to deal with them this morning. Such persons need a discourse to themselves. I am speaking to tender hearts, or to those who desire to have tender hearts; to those who have their faces towards Jerusalem though as yet they travel in the dark. If you are really desirous to obtain joy and peace through believing, we trust God may bless you to the obtaining of it this morning.

We suppose also that the persons whom we are addressing are not laboring under any bodily sickness such as might bring on hypochondriacal feelings, and those despondencies which are rather the symptoms of physical disease than marks of spiritual feeling. I believe there are some persons who are beyond the reach of the preacher, and who must be dealt with, if treated at all successfully, by the ordinary physician. Their case has gone beyond the limits of argument; their mind has got into a disordered condition, and the body also, and therefore both body and mind must be set right by some other means before it is likely that spiritual reasons will prevail upon them; but provided you are sane people in some measure of health, and that you are sincere persons, we think that with God's blessing we may be the means of comfort to you this morning.

At any rate, we will try. And we will begin by making two observations. We grant to you that *joy and peace are exceedingly desirable things;* we

hope you will never be satisfied until you get them, and enjoy very much of them; until you are, in fact, as the text puts it, filled with joy and peace. For your own sakes this is very desirable, because your present condition is a very mournful and unhappy one. It is still more desirable for the sake of your acquaintances and kinsfolk, for they set down your present despondency to your religion, and so you tend, unwittingly, to dishonor the Cross of Christ. I know you would be willing to suffer anything sooner than that the Gospel should be evilly spoken of; but it is evilly spoken of through you, and necessarily so, because you cannot expect carnal persons to have a discernment between your religious feelings, which are right, and those which are wrong. They set your present despondency down to religious feelings of some sort, and with one sweeping verdict they are apt to condemn religion altogether. And you do not wish this, surely for their own good, for you desire them to find peace. With all your anxiety for yourself, you are not selfish; you wish others to enjoy peace in Christ. You would consent, I believe, to the loss of your right eye if your husband and children, if your wife and friends might be reconciled to God by the blood of the Cross. At present, however you are standing in the way, and instead of assisting by proving that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," you are doing an injury to those dear immortal souls by the misrepresentation which you give them; I grant again that this is done unwittingly, but alas, you are as surely injuring them as if you designed to do them evil.

But a second remark I must also venture upon, namely that you must take care, while valuing joy and peace, that *you do not overestimate them;* for remember that joy and peace are, though eminently desirable, not infallible evidences of safety. There are many persons who have great joy and much peace who are not saved, for their joy springs from a mistake, and their peace is the false peace which does not rest upon the rock of Divine Truth, but upon the sand of their own imaginations. It is certainly a good sign that spring is come, that you find the weather to be so warm, but there are very mild days in winter. I must not infer because the heat of the sun is at such and such a degree, that therefore it is necessarily spring. And, on the other hand, we have had very cold days this week—cold days which, if we had to judge by such evidences, might have convinced us that we were rather in November than in May. And so, joy and peace are like fine sunny days; they come to those who have no faith who are in the winter of their unbelief, and they may not visit you who have believed; or, if they come, they may not stay, for there may be cold weather in May, and there may be some sorrow and some distress of mind even to a truly believing soul. Understand that you must not look upon the possession of joy and peace as being the absolutely necessary consequence of your being saved. A man may be in the lifeboat, but that lifeboat may be so tossed about that he may still feel himself exceedingly ill, and think himself to be still in peril. It is not his sense of safety that makes him safe; he is safe because he is in the lifeboat, whether he is sensible of it or not. Understand then that joy and peace are not infallible

or indispensable evidences of safety, and that they are certainly not unchanging evidences.

The brightest Christians lose their joy, and some of those who stand well in the things of God, and concerning whom you would entertain no doubt, entertain a great many suspicions, however, about themselves. Joy and peace are the elements of a Christian, but he is sometimes out of his element—joy and peace are his usual state, but there are times when, with fights within and wars without, his joy departs, and his peace is broken. The leaves on the tree prove that the tree is alive, but the absence of leaves will not prove that the tree is dead. True joy and peace may be very satisfactory evidences, but the absence of joy and peace, during certain seasons, can often be accounted for on some other hypothesis than that of there being no faith within.

And, once more, I pray you, dear Friends, not to seek joy and peace as the first and main thing. Let your prayer be, "Lord, give me comfort, but give me safety first. Forbid that I should take comfort except from Your right hand." Use Toplady's vow, which he puts into verse—

"I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me."

Believe that it were better for you to go all your life in darkness, and to end in Everlasting Life and the Light of God, than to enjoy much of what you thought to be heavenly joy here, and then to go into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Be anxious to be happy, but be more anxious to be holy. Be desirous after peace, but be more desirous still to get a good hope through Christ from which that peace may flow. I like the fruit of the tree, but if I transplant the tree, and put it into my garden, I would like that better. I like the gold from the mine, but if I may become the possessor of the mine itself, I would much prefer it. I like joy and peace, but I like better still that sacred faith which looks to Christ and brings me joy and peace as a consequence.

Well now, having thus paved the way by these remarks, we come more distinctly to the text. The text speaks of joy and peace in believing.

I. And the first observation shall be this—THE TEXT MAY BE USED TO CORRECT TWO ERRORS very, very common and very dangerous. The first of the two errors the text corrects is the error of supposing that there is a way of joy and peace through self. This is the broad road that leads to death, but it is full of travelers. In different forms and ways the most of men are trying to obtain joy and peace through something done by themselves, instead of resting upon the finished work of the Savior. Some look for joy and peace through good works. Now, I can suppose that if you and I had never sinned, joy and peace would have been the consequences of perfect holiness. Adam in the Garden must have had joy as the result of serving so good a Master, and he must have felt peace when at nightfall he could say, "O God, I have kept Your command, and I have not touched the forbidden fruit." Still the fear would haunt him, "perhaps I *may* do so," and that dark suspicion would go far to dampen his joy and disturb his peace.

But do you think that this can bring you solid peace? Since you and I have broken God's Law, any rational joy and peace are impossible under the Covenant of Works, for whatever may be the perfection of our future life, it can make no atonement for the past. You have broken the alabaster vase; you may preserve the fragments if you will, but you cannot make it whole again. You have spoiled the perfection of your obedience, and having ruined it, God cannot receive it at your hands. You may try if you please, but take my word for it, (for I have tried it too), it is as unlikely for you ever to get peace by attempting to obey God's Law as it is to gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. Many who are conscious of this run to another form. They say, "Then I will do my best, and having done my best I shall at any rate be able to say, 'Well, I can do no more.'" A man who is drowning may say that, but it is no solace to him as the billows close over him. In yonder burning house the woman in the upper story who has thought over all the plans of escaping finds it no sort of comfort to say, "I have done all I can, and can therefore do no more." What if you should do all you can? I am afraid none of you will ever do it, yet if you should, there is no peace or joy to be found in that.

Some try the plan of scrupulous observance of all religious ceremonies; now, however much these rites and services may differ externally, yet trusting in them is the same in all cases. You, all of you, feel vexed with the Romanist, that he can rely upon confession, upon penance imposed by his priest, or upon the hearing of masses. You are indignant with the Puseyite that in a professedly Protestant church he should put confidence in his baptism, and confirmation, and so on, but are you equally indignant with yourself that you should rely upon your own prayers or upon your own tears? Is there any more virtue before God in your prayers than in the prayers of priests? There certainly is no less, but is there any more? Is there any more virtue in your tears than there may be in those of a so-called saint? I tell you that if you trust in these things, your holiest emotions, and your best desires are nothing but an antichrist, foul and unclean, which God will abhor, for the way of salvation is not by your holiness nor by your ceremonies, nor by anything upon which you can put your hand. "If you lift up your hammer upon it," said God of His Altar, "you have polluted it." And so have you, if you have put your little finger to the work. Unless it is all of Christ, and not of yourself you have polluted it, and God will see to it that no joy or peace shall ever come to you by that road. Do not, therefore, try it. Do not try to get joy and peace by penitential feelings, by humbling yourself, by consecrating your life, or by any attempts of this kind. These things are good, pre-eminently good in themselves if they are used lawfully; but to rest in them will be your ruin, and as to your present peace and joy, it can never be obtained by work or by anything from yourself.

But the text also corrects another common error, namely, turning the text upside down. There is such a thing as joy and peace in believing, and some simpletons therefore infer that there is such a thing as believing in joy and peace. I believe there is such a thing but that it is of Satan, and that the sooner we are clear of it the better. My dear Friend,

to get joy and peace through believing is one thing; it is God's plan of salvation, but to get your believing as the result of your joy and peace is quite another thing, and it is of yourself, and is a snare of Satan. Beware of it! You will get peace just as the florist gets his flower from the bulb; but you will never get the bulb from the flower. Take the tulip and try it. That fine flower will come up if you put that ugly bulb into the ground and give it time; you will get the glory of the flower before long; but take the flower and put it into the best prepared earth, and see if you will ever get the bulb. Now joy and peace are the soul's flower, and if you get faith into the ground, joy and peace will come of it. But if you get joy and peace first, and say, "Now I believe," no you do not, it is not believing; it is the very opposite of it! You must not, therefore, reverse the laws and rules of right procedure.

Let me just argue this point with you. To trust Christ because you feel happy is in the first place irrational. Now suppose a man should have said during the last panic, "I feel sure that the Bank my money is in is safe." Why? "Because I feel so easy about my money." Now anybody would say to him, "That is no reason." Suppose he said, "I feel sure that my money is safe," and you had said, "What is the reason?" "Why because I believe the Bank is safe." "Oh," say you, "that is right enough—that is good reasoning." But here you put the effect in the place of the cause and try to make that a cause, but you cannot do it. If a man should say, "I have got a large estate in India." How do you know? "Why, because I feel so happy in thinking about it." "Why, you fool," say you, "that is no proof whatever, not the slightest." But if he says to you, "I feel very happy," and you ask him why, and he replies, "Because I have got an estate in India." "Oh," say you, "that may be right enough." A man may be thankful for that which he rightly possesses, but to make joy and peace the evidence of facts from without is supremely ridiculous; and for a man to say, "I know I am saved, because I am happy," is most irrational, while to be happy because you are saved is right enough. Oh, I pray you, take care that you do not act irrationally before God.

Or take another view of this thought. Suppose I am in fear this morning about the health of some dear friend. "Well," I say, "I should like to have my friend healthy, but I want to feel myself safe about that friend. I do not know anything about the state of my friend just now, and I am uneasy. Now I can tell you if I could get to feel easy, then I would be convinced that my friend was well." "Why," you would justly reply, "there is no connection between the two things. The proper mode of procedure is to try and find out whether your friend is well, then you will feel easy." But you say, "I would believe I was saved if I felt happy." Is there any reason in that? On the contrary, first of all believe that you are saved, and then happiness shall come of it, but you cannot believe that you are saved while you persist in doing what God tells you not to do—looking to your own joy and peace, instead of looking to the finished work of Jesus Christ.

While this is illogical and inconsistent it is also very irreverent. You say to God, "O God, You tell me to trust Christ, and I shall be saved.

Well, I cannot trust Christ, but I can trust my own feelings. And if I were very happy I could believe that He would save me." Oh let the words I have spoken be forgiven, if they sound like blasphemy, but I think they have the essence of blasphemy in them. What? Are my poor changeable frames of feeling to be set up in preference to the Word of Christ? He tells me if I trust Him I shall be saved, and I reply to Him, "I cannot trust Your Word, Jesus, but I could rely upon it if I felt so-and-so." That is to say I could trust myself but I cannot trust Him. Weep, dear Friends, that you should have been guilty of such irreverence, and do not persist in it.

Once again, is it not very egotistical? Here is a person who has God to deal with, and has the Divine Promise—"He who believes on Him is not condemned." And instead of confiding in this, he says, "No, I shall believe nothing which I do not feel. When I feel I am saved, I shall believe it. When I have joy in consequence of being saved, then I will trust Christ to save me." That is, "I will trust Him for nothing, but I will set up my own feelings and my own knowledge over and above the promises and the positive declarations of a dying Savior." May the Lord forgive you, my dear Friends, who are in this state of heart, for being so guilty in this thing, for I think, if nothing else should make you feel your sinnership, you ought to feel it on this account, that you find it hard to trust Christ. If you were what you should be, remember that to trust Christ would be the natural outgoings of your nature; but because your nature is what it ought not to be, it becomes so hard for you to trust the Truthful One while you think it so easy to trust in what is fickle as the wind, and false as the deceitful sea.

Well, I have just exposed these two matters, and want your patient attention while I seek to bring out the Truth of the text. We are finished with the errors that are not in it—now for the Truth of God that *is* in it.

II. The great Truth of the text is THAT BELIEVING IN CHRIST IS THE TRUE GROUND FOR JOY AND PEACE. What is believing in Christ? In one word it is trusting Christ. He is sent of God to save sinners, and those sinners who trust in Him to save them are saved. Faith then, the faith which is the ground of our joy and peace, is a simple trust in Christ. Now I feel sure, from what we understand of mental science as well as from the teaching of God's Word and one's own experience, that if a man unfeignedly trusts Christ, he must, in the main, have joy and peace. I think you will see this. There is a sinner who feels himself guilty before God, but he hears enough of the Gospel to understand that God has devised a plan of salvation. The very believing of that must give some sort of peace. The sinner would say, "I thought I could not be saved, but now the very whisper of that word, 'Savior,' gives me some hope. The black thought that it is impossible for me to be saved is gone. There is evidently a possibility, for there is a desire on God's part, or else He would not have provided a plan by which men might be saved."

When, however, the sinner comes to look at the Gospel more carefully, he perceives in the suitability of the plan, another cause for joy. "Why," he says, "I see it is thus—God will save me not on account of anything I do or am, but out of pure Divine Grace; I see that He has provided a

salvation, not for the good, but for the bad—not for those who have something to recommend themselves to Him—but for those who have nothing to recommend, but everything to disqualify them for His favor; and I see," says the sinner, "as I look at the Gospel, that the way to get a hold of this is not by feeling any good feeling—if so, it were impossible, not by doing any good works, else it were also beyond my power; but I perceive that the method of salvation is that of believing in the Savior. Now, if my heart is but right, if I really am desirous of salvation, what is it that I am expected to believe?" Already he feels a certain sense of joy at the thought of such a plan. By works he felt he could not be saved, but he begins to hope that it may be by that plan of faith which requires neither good feelings nor good works. And so he opens his ears and his heart too, and says, "Master, what is it I am to believe? Only tell me what it is. I am so sick of sin, and so sad at heart, that if I am to have joy and peace in believing, tell me! And if it is reasonable, if there is anything in it which a man can believe, I am prepared to accept it at once." Very well then, and so far we shall be agreed that the mere understanding that there is a Savior, and the information that that Savior is to be received by believing in Him has a tendency to give some joy and peace.

But now to the point. When the sinner asks, "What is it I am to believe in order to have peace? In whom am I to trust?" he is told that he is to look for his salvation, present and to come, wholly from the hands of Christ, and then he will be saved. "Oh," says he, "but what sort of a Christ is this I am to confide in? Is He worthy of my trust? That is all I want to know." And the reply we give to the sinner is this—we have trusted Christ for these reasons—

1. We have trusted Him because of the wonderful union of His Natures. He is God, and we know that whatever God undertakes, He is able to accomplish. But He is Man, and feeling that He is like ourselves, a Man, we realize that He has the requisite tenderness to deal with such poor sinners as we are, compassed about with infirmities. We are prepared to rely upon Him because of His Godhead, which renders Him Omnipotent. We are equally glad to trust Him because of His Manhood, which makes Him kind and considerate for our infirmities. It seems to us that if we believe Jesus Christ to be God and Man, it is not difficult to place ourselves in the hands of Incarnate Deity.

2. But next, we trust Him because of the evident truthfulness of His Character. We have read the four Evangelists through, and we find Him scorning every subterfuge. His Character seems to us to be resplendent with the Truth of God. We think that no exaggeration was used when it was said, "And we beheld His Glory, the Glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth." Our Lord seems to us to be the most tender of Men, and the most truthful of Men, too. We cannot believe that He would lie. Moreover, when we consider Him to be God we understand that God cannot lie, and we feel inclined to think that every promise He has given will be kept. We believe that if He undertakes to save, Heaven and earth may pass away, but He will do what He has promised. Now we think this is a good reason for our confidence if there were no others.

Could we suspect the Savior we should find it difficult to trust Him, but as we cannot imagine a cause for suspecting Him, we (and oh, that you may be brought to the same pass!) feel shut up to believing Him, and when He says, "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," we trust Him, and we get rest, and we believe that if *you* trust Him you will get rest too. Millions of spirits before the Throne of God all bear witness to the trustworthiness of Christ. He did not fail one of them—Mary Magdalene or the thief on the cross, or Saul of Tarsus, or even blaspheming Peter—they have all found Him able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him. And we therefore believe Him because of His Nature, and of the trustfulness of His Character.

3. But the main reason, perhaps, why we believe Him is because He tells us, and God tells us, that He was sent of God on purpose to save. God has set forth Christ. Christ did not undertake this work on His own account apart from heavenly authorization. He is called "Messiah," that is, the Sent of God. Now it seems to us that if God sent Christ on purpose to save, and Christ comes into the world and says, "Trust, and I will save you," He has God to back Him, and the everlasting honor of the Eternal Trinity is pledged to every soul that comes to rest on Christ to be saved. I venture to say that unless you can make God a liar, you must believe in Christ, and if you are not prepared to trust Christ, remember you do what John says, and I hope you shudder at the thought of doing it—"He that believes not God has made Him a liar, because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son."

4. Another reason why we trust Christ is because we conceive that the merit of His sufferings must be great enough to save us. Beloved Hearer, if you cannot trust Christ, will you come with me a few minutes? Can you see the Son of God agonizing in the Garden? Your Maker lies on the ground. Can you see Him taken before Herod and Pilate, and there mocked and scourged and spit upon? Can your eyes endure to see that spectacle of grief when the plowers made deep furrows on His blessed back? Can you believe that He is very God of very God, and yet is suffering thus? Can you see Jehovah grind Him to powder between the upper and the nether millstone of His wrath? Can you hear Him say, "It is finished"? Can you mark the fearful shriek of "Eloi! Eloi! Lama Sabacthani?" Can you believe that this is the Son of God—standing for sinners, and suffering all this weight of wrath and punishment for us, and yet think that He is not worthy of being trusted to do that for whom He died? Oh, Sinner! Let me tell you, when I heard it said to me, "Look unto Christ and be saved," I did look, and when I saw God suffering for me, the perfect Son of Man bleeding for me, the Immaculate and Innocent One afflicted for me, and Jehovah Himself suffering for me in the Person of His own dear Son, I could not help believing. And it does seem to me this morning that if you really believe that all this has occurred, and that Christ bids you trust Him, you will not say any more, "I cannot trust Him." I hope you will say instead, "I cannot help trusting

Him." The thing commends itself so to me—if Christ died to save He is able to save.

5. We have still another reason. After our Lord had died and was buried, He was put into the tomb, but He could not be held there. On the third day He rose again from the dead, and now He ever lives to make intercession for us. He is gone up on high with this resolve upon His heart, that He will plead for sinners, and that every sinner who seeks God through Him shall find peace by Him. This day I hope your faith believes it. This day the Savior, once slain, stands a living priest before the Father's Throne, and this is His plea, "Father, forgive them. Father, forgive them." Now it is written that He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for us. Now we feel as if a living Savior being what He is, having done what He has done, must be able to save, and we therefore trust Him. Now then, if you wind it all up, and say to me, "Why do you personally believe you are saved?" I will tell you. I believe I am saved, I *know* I am—and the ground of my assertion is not because I feel I am; nor yet because I can preach to you about it, nor because I sometimes or generally feel joy and peace, but I believe I am saved because I do—God knows I do—trust myself wholly and entirely in the hands of Him whose business it is to save sinners.

I find my name in the Bible. Why do you look at me? Have you never heard of the little child that sat reading the Bible, and someone said to her, "Why do you read that Book so much?" She said, "I have always loved to read it since I found my name in it." "Found your name in it!" "Yes," said she, "here it is." And she pointed to the text, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "That is my name, Sir. That is my name; for if you are not a sinner, I am." I know myself to be laden with iniquity, to be defiled with all sorts of sin in my holiest times. I have not one good work that I dare think of, much more, trust to, but being what I am, unworthy, undeserving, and Hell-deserving, I trust Christ to save me—and if He does not save me, He is not as good as His Word; but I have no suspicion about that—

"I know that safe with Him remains
Protected by His power
What I've committed to His hands,
Till the decisive hour."

And now I get joy and peace; but if I wait for joy and peace, and afterwards trust, I go the wrong way to work, and put the cart before the horse. Then I have begun to expect a harvest before I sow the wheat—to expect the flower before I cultivate the stem, and I shall be mistaken and go down to the pit of Hell with a curse, because I would not obey the command, "Believe and live." We will now close with the last point.

III. Remember that THE PRINCIPLE OF THE TEXT IS OF CONSTANT APPLICATION—JOY AND PEACE ALWAYS COME THROUGH BELIEVING.

I have told you we do not always have joy and peace, but still, in the main, joy and peace are the result of believing, and they are results, not

sometimes, but in every case. For instance, as soon as a person is saved, one of the earliest evidences of spiritual life is a great battle within. Some have the notion that as soon as they are saved they shall never have to fight. Why, it is then that you begin the campaign. The moment you get into Canaan, what are you to do? Canaan is yours now; you have passed out of the wilderness; it is all yours; what have you got to do? Why you must always seek to drive those Canaanites out, and you will fight continually till you get to Heaven. You did not expect this. Well, but you shall have joy and peace while the fighting is going on. Is it possible to be fighting with inbred sins, and yet to have joy and peace? My dear Friends, it is not only possible, but it is the only chance we have of victory. I know that some of you—and I deeply sympathize with you—are fighting with your bad temper, and with many other imperfections, but you have not believed in Christ, and you have not any joy and peace, and you cannot conquer that evil spirit. Of course you cannot, because while you are distressed in mind, that helps to irritate you; but if you simply believe Jesus, and get joy and peace, oh, then you can use the sword against that bad temper of yours. You will say to these little worries, "Be off with you! I have something more to think of! I have something sweeter to cheer me than anything you can bring to annoy me."

Why, you will say to yourself, "I trust Christ to save me, and I know He will do it, for He is no liar, and oh, now it is that I feel peace, and now, Lord, help me to overcome that temper of mine! Enable me to be holy like You, since You have done so much for me; now lend me strength." But you cannot do this, nor hope to conquer except by the blood of the Lamb. Go and wash in the fountain He has opened, and you shall be more than a conqueror through Him who has loved you.

Furthermore, remember that even after you are secure in Christ, and accepted before God, and clothed in Jesus' Righteousness, you may sometimes get despondent. Christian men are but men, and they may have a bad liver or an attack of bile, or some trial, and then they get depressed even if they have ever so much Divine Grace. I would defy the Apostle Paul himself to help it. But what then? Why then you can get joy and peace through believing. I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go through, but I always get back again by this—I know I trust Christ. I have no reliance but in Him, and if He falls, I shall fall with Him. But if He does not, I shall not. Because He lives, I shall live also—and I spring to my feet again and fight with my depressions of spirit, and get the victory through it; and so may you, and so you *will*, for there is no other way of escaping from it. In your most depressed seasons you are to get joy and peace through believing. "Ah!" says one, "but suppose you have fallen into some great sin—what then?" Why then the more reason that you should cast yourself upon Him. Do you think Jesus Christ is only for little sinners? Is He a doctor who only heals finger-aches? Beloved, it is not faith to trust Christ when I have no sin, but it is true faith when I am foul, and black, and filthy; when during the day I have tripped up and fallen, and done serious damage to my joy and peace—to

go back again to that dear Fountain and say, "Lord, I never loved washing as much before as I do tonight, for today I have made a fool of myself; I have said and done what I ought not to have done, and I am ashamed and full of confusion, but I believe Christ can save me, even me, and by His Grace I will rest in Him still."

That is the true way of Christian life and the only way of getting joy and peace. Go to Christ even when sin prevails. "Yes, but," I hear one say, "I am so afraid of presumption." Well, I am not sorry that you are, but when you are most afraid of presumption, the true way to get joy and peace and to be kept from presumption is by believing. They say that "like cures like." Certainly belief cures presuming; trusting Christ cures trusting self. Dear Friend, when you are afraid of presuming, believe; when you say, "Perhaps, after all, I may be cast away," then go to the Cross and say, "But if I am I will be cast away trusting in Christ." "Pshaw," says the devil, "you fool! Do you think that such a sinner as you can ever be perfectly saved?" Say to the devil, "Whether I am a fool or not I do not know, but if I am not saved, I will be damned trusting Christ. If I am cast away, I will be cast away clinging to Him." Stick to this, dear Friends, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." You cannot help having joy and peace then—

"And when your eye of faith is dim,
Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim!
Still at His footstool bow the knee,
And Israel's God your strength, your peace shall be."

Only let your confidence be not in your peace, not in your joy, but in Christ.

Now, I will finish with this declaration—that if you can get into such a state that all the sins that were ever committed should swear that they will block your pathway to peace; and if all the suggestions of Hell that ever came up from the infernal pit should surround you at one time; and if, in his own proper person, the very Prince of Hell should stand across the way and swear to spill your soul's blood; and if, in addition to this, the light of God's Countenance should be hidden from you, and no promise should seem to come comfortably with power to your soul; and if, over and above this, every Christian minister should be silent, or have no word for you but condemnation, and every Christian should turn his back on you, and tell you that you were a hypocrite, a deceiver, a foul and lost villain, and if conscience should come in at the back of these and say, "Every word of this is true, you are all this," yet, yet in that fearful extremity, if you can believe, you are saved. If you can then come, even in the most abject, filthy, leprous, horrible condition, so that the blackness of Hell were whiteness compared to you, and the hardness of granite were softness compared to your horrible and obdurate heart, yet if you can come and believe Christ is able to save to the uttermost, and you can fling yourself as a helpless, lost one, at the foot of His dear Cross, and resolve to live or to die there, you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand, for He will save, and you will rest in His Love, and if you believe in Him, you can no more perish than He can perish, and, unless He can be untrue and reverse His promise, and cast

His blood upon the ground to be spilt in vain, it is not possible that a soul trusting in Jesus should be lost! May God bless this testimony to you! I have brought you to the water, but I cannot make you drink. I can bring Christ to you in the preaching, but I cannot bring you to Christ. However, I can pray this, that the Lord Jesus may now bless the word and seal it home, both to heart and conscience, for His name's sake.

One word before we part to those who know neither joy nor peace through faith in Jesus, and have no wish to share these blessings with us because they are satisfied with the delusions of the god of this world. Weigh for one moment your so-called joy with ours, and put your peace as you conceive of peace into the scale against ours. Judge now. Is your joy as pure? Has it no alloy? Are your cups without dregs, and your delights without bitterness? Is it as lasting as ours? Will it never be cut off? Does your sun never go down? Do your riches never take to themselves wings and fly away? Does no moth corrupt, no thief break through and steal? Is it as powerful to fill the heart at all times? Does it never pall? Are you never weary of your delights? Can you live upon them forever, and wish no higher good than to have them continued through eternity? Do your pleasures ennoble and exalt? Are you led by them ever higher and higher? Do they elevate you as a man, and develop every higher power and faculty of your being? Do they give you a power and a strength in the path of duty, and never lead astray to folly? Or are they prone to spread snares for your feet, and to beguile you into evil ways?

Ponder these questions, and, if I am not mistaken, you will learn to despise your present state, and seek that joy and peace which come through believing in Jesus. May it be so! Amen.

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THE GARDEN OF THE SOUL
NO. 693

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

"A place called Gethsemane."
Matthew 26:36.

THOUGH I have taken only these few words for my text, I shall endeavor to bring the whole narrative before your mind's eyes. It is a part of the teaching of Holy Writ that man is a composite being—his nature being divisible into three parts—"spirit," "soul," and "body." I am not going to draw any nice distinctions tonight between the spirit and the soul, or to analyze the connecting link between our immaterial life and consciousness, and the physical condition of our nature, and the materialism of the world around us. Suffice it to say that whenever our vital organization is mentioned, this triple constitution is pretty sure to be referred to. If you notice it carefully, you will see in our Savior's sufferings on our behalf that the Passion extended to His spirit, soul, and body; for although at the last extremity upon the Cross it was hard to tell in which respect He suffered most, all three being strained to the utmost, yet it is certain there were three distinct conflicts in accordance with this threefold endowment of Humanity.

The first part of our Lord's dolorous pain fell upon His spirit. This took place at the table in that upper chamber where He ate the Passover with His disciples. Those of you who have read the narrative attentively will have noticed these remarkable words in the 13th Chapter of John and the 21st verse: "When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me." Of that silent conflict in the Savior's heart while He was sitting at the table no one was a spectator. Into any man's spiritual apprehensions it was beyond the power of any other creature to penetrate; how much less into the spiritual conflicts of the Man Christ Jesus? No one could by any possibility have gazed upon these veiled mysteries. He seems to have sat there for a time like one in the deepest abstraction; He fought a mighty battle within Himself. When Judas rose and went out it may have been a relief. The Savior gave out a hymn as if to celebrate His conflict; then, rising up, He went forth to the Mount of Olives. His discourse with His disciples there is recorded in that wonderful Chapter, the 15th of John, so full of holy triumph, beginning thus, "I am the true vine."

He went to the agony in the same joyous spirit like a conqueror, and oh, how He prayed! That famous prayer, what a profound study it is for us! It ought, properly, to be called "The Lord's Prayer." The manner and the matter are alike impressive. "These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up

His eyes to Heaven and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You." He seems to have been chanting a melodious paean just then at the thought that His first battle had been fought, that His spirit, which had been troubled, had risen superior to the conflict, and that He was already victorious in the first of the three terrible struggles. As soon as this had occurred there came another hour, and with it the power of darkness in which not so much the spirit as the soul of our blessed Lord was to sustain the shock of the encounter. This took place in the Garden. You know that after He had come forth triumphant in this death struggle He went to the conflict more expressly in His body, undergoing in His physical Nature the scourging, the spitting, and the Crucifixion, although in that third case there was a grief of spirit and an anguish of soul likewise, which mingled their tributary streams. We would counsel you to meditate upon each separately, according to the time and the circumstance in which the pre-eminence of any one of these is distinctly referred to.

This second conflict which we have now before us well deserves our most reverent attention. I think it has been much misunderstood. Possibly a few thoughts may be given us tonight which shall clear away the mist from our understanding, and open some of the mystery to our hearts. It seems to me that the agony in the Garden was a repetition of the temptation in the wilderness. These two contests with the Prince of Darkness have many points of exact correspondence. If carefully pondered, you may discover that there is a singular and striking connection between the triple temptation and the triple prayer. Having fought Satan at the first in the wilderness, on the threshold of His public ministry, our Lord now finds him at the last in the Garden as He nears the termination of His mediatorial work on earth. Keep in mind that it is the *soul* of Jesus of which we now speak, while I take up the several points consecutively, offering a few brief words on each.

THE PLACE OF CONFLICT has furnished the theme of so many discourses that you can hardly expect anything new to be said upon it. Let us, however, stir up your minds by way of remembrance. Jesus went to the GARDEN, there to endure the conflict because it was the place of meditation. It seemed fit that His mental conflict should be carried on in the place where man is most at home in the pensive musings of his mind—

"The garden contemplation suits."

As Jesus had been accustomed to indulge Himself with midnight reveries in the midst of those olive groves, He fitly chooses a place sacred to the studies of the mind to be the place memorable for the struggles of His soul—

"In a garden man became
Heir of endless death and pain."

It was there the first Adam fell, and it was meet that there—

"The Second Adam should restore
The ruins of the first."

He went to that particular Garden, it strikes me, because it was within the boundaries of Jerusalem. He might have gone to Bethany that night as He had on former nights, but why did He not? Do you not know that it was according to the Levitical Law that the Israelites should sleep within the boundaries of Jerusalem on the Paschal night? When they came up to the Temple to keep the Passover they must not go away till that Paschal night was over. So our Lord selected a rendezvous within the liberties of the city that He might not transgress even the slightest jot or tittle of the Law.

And again, He chose that Garden, among others contiguous to Jerusalem, because Judas knew the place. He wanted retirement, but He did not want a place where He could skulk and hide Himself. It was not for Christ to give Himself up—that were like suicide; but it was not for Him to withdraw and secrete Himself—that were like cowardice. So He goes to a place which He is quite sure that Judas, who was aware of His habits, knows He is accustomed to visit; and there, like one who, so far from being afraid to meet His death, pants for the Baptism with which He is to be baptized, He awaits the crisis that He had so distinctly anticipated. "If they seek Me," He seemed to say, "I will be where they can readily find Me, and lead Me away." Every time we walk in a garden I think we ought to remember the Garden where the Savior walked, and the sorrows that befell Him there. Did He select a garden, I wonder, because we are all so fond of such places, thus linking our seasons of recreation with the most solemn mementoes of Himself? Did He recollect what forgetful creatures we are, and did He therefore let His blood fall upon the soil of a garden, that so often as we dig and delve therein we might lift up our thoughts to Him who fertilized earth's soil, and delivered it from the curse by virtue of His own agony and griefs?

Our next thought shall be about the WITNESSES.

Christ's spiritual suffering was altogether within the veil. As I have said, no one could describe it. But His soul-sufferings had some witnesses. Not the rabble, not the multitude; when they saw His bodily suffering, that was all they could understand, therefore it was all they were permitted to see. Just so, Jesus had often shown them the flesh, as it were, or the carnal things of His teaching when He gave them a parable; but He had never shown them the soul, the hidden life of His teaching, this He reserved for His disciples. And thus it was in His Passion; He let the Greek and the Roman gather around in mockery, and see His flesh torn, and rent, and bleeding, but He did not let them go into the Garden with Him to witness His anguish or His prayer. Within that enclosure none came but the disciples. And mark, my Brothers and Sisters, not all the disciples were there. There were a 120 of His disciples, at least, if not more, but only 11 bore Him company then. Those 11 must cross that gloomy Brook of Kidron with Him, and eight of them are set to keep the door, their faces towards the world, there to sit and watch; only three go into the Garden, and those three see something of His sufferings; they behold Him when the agony begins, but still at a

distance. He withdraws from them a stone's cast, for He must tread the winepress alone, and it is not possible that the priestly Sufferer should have a single peer in the Offering which He is to present to His God. At the last it came to this, that there was only one observer. The chosen three had fallen asleep, God's unsleeping eyes alone looked down upon Him. The Father's ear alone attended to the piteous cries of the Redeemer—

"He knelt, the Savior knelt and prayed,
When but His Father's eyes
Looked through the lonely Garden's shade
On that dread agony;
The Lord of All above, beneath,
Was bowed with sorrow unto death!"

Then there came an unexpected visitor. Amazement wrapped the sky as Christ was seen of angels to be sweating blood for us! "Give strength to Christ," the Father said as He addressed some strong-winged spirit—

"The astonished seraph bowed his head,
And flew from worlds on high."

He stood to strengthen, not to fight, for Christ must fight alone; but applying some holy cordial, some sacred anointing to the oppressed Champion who was ready to faint, He, our great Deliverer, received strength from on high, and rose up to the last of His fights. Oh, my dear Friends, does not all this teach us that the outside world knows nothing about Christ's soul-sufferings? They draw a picture of Him; they carve a piece of wood or ivory, but they do not know His soul-sufferings; they cannot enter into them! No, the mass of His own people do not know them, for they are not made conformable to those sufferings by a spiritual fellowship. We have not that keen sense of mental things to sympathize with such grieving as He had, and even the favored ones, the three—the Elect out of the Elect—who have the most of spiritual Graces and who have therefore the most of suffering to endure, and the most of depression of spirits, even they cannot pry into the fullness of the mystery. God only knows the soul-anguish of the Savior when He sweat great drops of blood; angels saw it, but yet they could not understand it. They must have wondered more when they saw the Lord of Life and Glory sorrowful with exceeding sorrowfulness, even unto death, than when they saw this round world spring into beautiful existence from nothingness, or when they saw Jehovah garnish the heavens with His Spirit, and with His hand form the crooked serpent. Beloved, we cannot expect to know the length and breadth and height of these things, but only as our own experience deepens and darkens shall we know more and more of what Christ suffered in the Garden.

Having thus spoken about the place and the witnesses, let us say a little concerning THE CUP ITSELF.

What was this "cup" about which our Savior prayed—"If it is possible let this cup pass from Me"? Some of us may have entertained the notion that Christ desired, if possible, to escape from the pangs of death. You may conjecture that although He had undertaken to redeem His people,

yet His Human Nature flinched and started back at the perilous hour. *I* have thought so myself in times past, but on more mature consideration, I am fully persuaded that such a supposition would reflect a dishonor upon the Savior. I do not consider that the expression "this cup" refers to death at all. Nor do I imagine that the dear Savior meant for a single moment to express even a particle of desire to escape from the pangs which were necessary for our Redemption. This "cup," it appears to me, relates to something altogether different—not to the last conflict, but to the conflict in which He was then engaged. If you study the words—and especially the Greek words—which are used by the various Evangelists, I think you will find that they all tend to suggest and confirm this view of the subject. The Savior's spirit, having been vexed, and having triumphed, was next attacked by the Evil One upon His mental Nature, and this mental Nature became in consequence most horribly despondent and cast down. As when on the pinnacle of the Temple the Savior felt the fear of falling, so when in the Garden He felt a sinking of soul, an awful despondency, and He began to be very sorrowful. The cup, then, which He desired to pass from Him was, I believe, that cup of despondency, and nothing more. I am the more disposed so to interpret it, because not a single word recorded by any of the four Evangelists seems to exhibit the slightest wavering on the part of our Savior as to offering Himself up as an Atoning Sacrifice. Their testimony is frequent and conclusive—"He set His face to go towards Jerusalem." "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it is accomplished." "The Son of Man goes, as it is written of Him." You never hear a sentence of reluctance or hesitancy. It does not seem to be consistent with the Character of our blessed Lord, even as Man, to suppose that He desired that final cup of His sufferings to pass away from Him at all.

Moreover, there is this, which I take to be a strong argument. The Apostle tells us that He was "heard in that He feared." Now, if He feared to die, He was not heard, for He did die. If He feared to bear the wrath of God, or the weight of human sin, and really desired to escape from them, then He was not heard, for He did feel the weight of sin, and He did suffer the weight of His Father's vindictive wrath. Thus it appears to me that what He feared was that dreadful depression of mind which had suddenly come upon Him, so that His soul was very heavy. He prayed His Father that that cup might pass away; and so it did, for I do not see in all the Savior's griefs afterwards that singular overwhelming depression He endured when in the Garden. He suffered much in Pilate's Hall, He suffered much upon the Cross; but there was, I was almost about to say, a bold cheerfulness about Him even to the last, when for the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross; yes, when He cried, "I thirst," and, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" I think I notice a holy force and vigor about the words and thoughts of the Sufferer which the weak and trembling state of His body could not extinguish! The language of that 22nd Psalm, which seems to have struck

the keynote, if I may so speak, of His devotion on the Cross, is full of faith and confidence. If the first verse contains the bitterest of woe, the 21st verse changes the plaintive strain. "You have heard (or answered) Me" marks a transition from suffering to satisfaction which it is delightful to dwell upon.

Now, perhaps some of you may think that if this cup only meant depression of the spirits and dismay of the soul it was nothing of much significance, or at least it weakens the spell of those words and deeds which twine around Gethsemane. Permit me to beg your pardon. I know personally that there is nothing on earth that the human frame can suffer to be compared with despondency and prostration of mind. Such is the dolefulness and gloom of a heavy soul, yes, a soul exceedingly heavy even unto death, that I could imagine the pangs of dissolution to be lighter! In our last hour joy may lighten up the heart, and the sunshine of Heaven within may bear up the soul when all outside is dark. But when the iron enters into a man's soul he is unmanned, indeed. In the cheerlessness of such exhausted spirits the mind is confused; well can I understand the saying that is written, "I am a worm and no man," of one who is a prey to such melancholy. Oh that cup! When there is not a promise that can give you comfort, when everything in the world looks dark, when your very mercies frighten you, and rise like hideous specters and portents of evil before your view, when you are like the brothers of Benjamin as they opened the sacks and found the money, but instead of being comforted said, "What is this that God has done unto us?" When everything looks black, and you seem, through some morbid sensitiveness into which you have fallen, to distort every object and every circumstance into a dismal caricature, let me say to you, that for us poor sinful men this is a cup more horrible than any which inquisitors could mix. I can imagine Anne Askew on the rack, braving it out, like the bold woman she was, facing all her accusers and saying—

"I am not she that lets
My anchor to fall;
For every drizzling mist
My ship's substantial,"

but I cannot think of a man in the soul-sickness of such depression of spirits as I am referring to, finding in thought or song a soothing for his woe. When God touches the very secret of a man's soul, and his spirit gives way, he cannot bear up very long; and this seems to me to have been the cup which the Savior had to drink just then, from which He prayed to be delivered, and concerning which He was heard.

Consider for a moment what depressed His soul. Everything, my Brothers and Sisters, everything was draped in gloom, and overcast with darkness that might be felt! There was *the past.* Putting it as I think He would look at it, His life had been unsuccessful. He could say with Isaiah, "Who has believed Our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." And

how poor was that little success He did have! There were His 12 disciples; one of them He knew to be on the way to betray Him; eight of them were asleep at the entrance to the Garden, and three asleep within the garden! He knew that they would all forsake Him, and one of them would deny Him with oaths and curses! What was there to comfort Him? When a man's spirit sinks he needs a cheerful companion; he needs somebody to talk to. Was not this felt by the Savior? Did He not go three times to His disciples? He knew they were but men, but then a man can comfort a man in such a time as that. The sight of a friendly face may cheer one's own countenance, and enliven one's heart. But He had to shake them from their slumber, and then they stared at Him with unmeaning gazes. Did He not return back again to prayer because there was no eye to pity, and none that could help? He found no relief. Half a word sometimes, or even a smile, even though it is only from a child, will help you when you are sad and prostrate. But Christ could not get even that. He had to rebuke them almost bitterly. Is not there a tone of irony about His remonstrance—"Sleep on now and take your rest"?

He was not angry, but He did feel it. When a man is low-spirited he feels more keenly and acutely than at other times; and although the splendid charity of our Lord made that excuse—"The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak," yet it did cut Him to the heart, and He had an anguish of soul like that which Joseph felt when he was sold into Egypt by his brothers. You will see, then, that both the past and the present were sufficient to depress Him to the greatest degree. But there was *the future;* and as He looked forward to that, devoted as His heart was, and unfaltering as was the courage of His soul (for it were sacrilege and slander, I think, to impute even a thought of flinching to Him), yet His human heart shrank back in fear; He seemed to think—"Oh, how shall I bear it?" The mind started back from the shame, and the body started back from the pain, and the soul and body both started back from the thought of death, and of death in such an ignominious way—

"He experienced them all—the doubt, the strife,
The faint, perplexing dread;
The mists that hang over parting life
All gathered round His head—
That He who gave man's breath might know
The very depths of human woe."

Brothers and Sisters, none of us have such cause for depression as the Savior had. We have not His load to carry, and we have a Helper to help us whom He had not, for God, who forsook Him, will never forsake us. Our soul may be cast down within us, but we can never have such great reason for it, nor can we ever know it to so great an extent as our dear Redeemer did. I wish I could picture to you that lovely Man, friendless like a stag at bay with the dogs compassing Him round about, and the assembly of the wicked enclosing Him; foreseeing every incident of His Passion, even to the piercing of His hands and His feet, the parting of His garments, and the lots cast upon His vesture, and anticipating that last death-sweat without a drop of water to cool His lips! I can but conceive

that His soul must have felt within itself a solemn trembling such as might well make Him say, "I am exceedingly sorrowful even unto death."

This, then, seems to me to be the cup which our Lord Jesus Christ desired to have passed from Him, and which did pass from Him in due time.

Advancing a little further, I want you to think of the AGONY.

We have been accustomed so to call this scene in the Garden. You all know that it is a word which signifies "wrestling." Now, there is no wrestling where there is only one individual. To this agony, therefore, there must have been two parties. Were there not, however mystically speaking, two parties in Christ? What do I see in this King of Sharon but, as it were, two armies? There was the stern resolve to do all, and to accomplish the work which He had undertaken; and there was the mental weakness and depression which seemed to say to Him, "You cannot; You will never accomplish it." "Our fathers trusted in You, and You did deliver them; they cried unto You, and were delivered; they trusted in You, and were not confounded." "But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people." So that the two thoughts come into conflict—the shrinking of the soul, and yet the determination of His Invincible Will to go on with it, and to work it out. He was in an agony in that struggle between the overwhelming fear of His mind, and the noble eagerness of His spirit. I think, too, that Satan afflicted Him; that the powers of darkness were permitted to use their utmost craft in order to drive the Savior to absolute despair. One expression used to depict it I will handle very delicately; a word that, in its rougher sense, means, and has been applied to persons out of their mind and bereft for a while of reason. The term used concerning the Savior in Gethsemane can only be interpreted by a word equivalent to our "distracted." He was like one bewildered with an overwhelming weight of anxiety and terror. But His Divine Nature awakened up His spiritual faculties and His mental energy to display their full power. His faith resisted the temptation of unbelief.

The heavenly goodness that was within Him so mightily contended with the Satanic suggestions and insinuations which were thrown in His way that it came to a wrestling. I should like you to catch the idea of wrestling as though you saw two men trying to throw one another, struggling together till the muscles stand out, and the veins start like whip-cord on their brows. That is a fearful sight when two men in desperate wrath thus close in with each other. The Savior was thus wrestling with the powers of darkness, and He grappled with such terrible earnestness in the fray that He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood—

"The powers of Hell united pressed,
And squeezed His heart, and bruised His breast,
What dreadful conflicts raged within;
When sweat and blood forced through His skin!"

Observe the way in which Christ conducted the agony. It was by prayer. He turned to His Father three times with the same words. It is an index of distraction when you repeat yourself. Three times with the same words He approached His God—"My Father, let this cup pass from Me." Prayer is the great cure-all for depression of spirit. "When my spirit is overwhelmed within me, I will look to the Rock that is higher than I." There will be a breaking up altogether, and a bursting of spirit, unless you pull up the sluices of supplication, and let the soul flow out in secret communion with God. If we would state our griefs to God they would not fret and fume within, and wear out our patience as they sometimes do. In connection with the agony and the prayer there seems to have been a bloody sweat. It has been thought by some that the passage only means that the sweat was like drops of blood; But then the word "like," is used in Scripture to signify not merely resemblance but the identical thing itself. We believe that the Savior did sweat from His entire Person, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Such an occurrence is very rare indeed among men. It has happened some few times. Books of surgery record a few instances, but I believe that the persons who under some horrifying grief experience such a sweat never recover—they have always died. Our Savior's anguish had this peculiarity about it, that though He sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground so plentiful as if in a crimson shower, yet He survived. His blood must be shed by the hands of others, and His soul poured out unto death in another form. Remembering the doom of sinful man—that he should eat his bread in the sweat of his face, we see the penalty of sin exacted in awful measure on Him who stood for sinners.

As we eat bread this day at the Lord's Table, we commemorate the drops of blood that He sweat. With perspiration on his face, and huge drops on his brow man toils for the bread that perishes; but bread is only the staff of life; when Christ toiled to give life itself to men He sweat, not the common perspiration of the outward form, but the blood which flows from the very heart itself. Would that I had words to bring all this before you. I want to make you *see* it; I want to make you feel it. The heavenly Lover who had nothing to gain except to redeem our souls from sin and Satan, and to win our hearts for Himself, leaves the shining courts of His eternal Glory and comes down as a poor, feeble, and despised Man. He is so depressed at the thought of what is yet to be done and suffered, and under such pressure of Satanic influence, that He sweat drops of blood, falling upon the cold frosty soil in that moon-lit Garden. Oh the love of Jesus! Oh the weight of sin! Oh the debt of gratitude which you and I owe Him!—

"Were the whole realm of Nature mine,
That were a present far too small—
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!"

We must proceed with the rich narrative to meditate upon our SAVIOR CONQUERING.

Our imagination is slow to fix upon this precious feature of the dolorous history. Though He had said, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," yet presently we observe how tranquil and calm He is when He rises up from that scene of prostrate devotion! He remarks, as though it were in an ordinary tone of voice, some expected circumstance—"He is at hand who shall betray Me; rise, let us be going." There is no distraction now, no hurry, no turmoil, no exceedingly sorrow even unto death. Judas comes, and Jesus says, "Friend, why are you come?" You would hardly know Him to be the same Man who was so sorrowful just now. One word with an emanation of His Deity suffices to make all the soldiers fall backwards. Soon He turns round and touches the ear of the High Priest's servant, and heals it as in happier days He healed the diseases and the wounds of the people who flocked around Him in His journeys. Away He goes, so calm and collected that unjust accusations cannot extort a reply from Him; and though beset on every hand, yet is He led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth. That was a magnificent calmness of mind that sealed His lips, and kept Him passive before His foes. You and I could not have done it. It must have been a deep profound peace within which enabled Him to be thus mute and still amidst the hoarse murmur of the council and the boisterous tumult of the multitude. I believe that having fought the enemy within He had achieved a splendid victory; He was heard in that He feared, and was now able in the fullness of His strength to go out to the last tremendous conflict in which He met the embattled hosts of earth and Hell—and yet unabashed after He had encountered them all, to wave the banner of triumph, and to say, "It is finished."

Let us ask, in drawing to a conclusion, what is the LESSON FROM ALL THIS?

I think I could draw out 20 lessons, but if I did they would not be as good and profitable as the one lesson which the Savior draws Himself. What was the lesson which He particularly taught to His disciples? Now, Peter, James, and John, open your ears. And you, Magdalene, and you, Mary, and you, the wife of Herod's steward, and other gracious women, listen for the inference which I am going to draw. It is not mine—it is that of our Lord and Master Himself. With how much heed should we treasure it up! "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." "Watch," and yet again, "Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation." I have been turning this over in my mind to make out the connection. Why on this particular occasion should He exhort them to watch? It strikes me that there were two sorts of watching. Did you notice that there were eight disciples at the Garden gate? They were watching, or ought to have been; and three were inside the Garden; they too were watching, or ought to have been. But they watched differently. Which way were the eight looking? It strikes me that they were set there to look outwards—to watch lest Christ should be surprised by those who would attack Him. That was the reason for their being put there. The other three were set to

watch His actions and His words; to look at the Savior and see if they could help, or cheer, or encourage Him.

Now, you and I have reason to look both ways, and the Savior seems to say as we look upon the agony—"You will have to feel something like this, therefore watch," watch outwards; be always on your watchtower lest sin surprise you. It is through sin that you will be brought into this agony; it is by giving Satan an advantage over you that the sorrows of your soul will be multiplied. If your foot slips your heart will become the prey of gloom. If you neglect communion with Jesus, if you grow cold or lukewarm in your affections, if you do not live up to your privileges, you will become the prey of darkness, dejection, discouragement, and despair; therefore, watch, lest *you* enter upon this great and terrible temptation. Satan cannot bring strong faith, when it is in healthy exercise, into such a state of desolation. It is when your faith declines and your love grows negligent, and your hope is inanimate, that he can bring you into such disconsolate heaviness that you see not your signs, nor know whether you are a Believer or not. You will not be able to say, "My Father," for your soul will doubt whether you are a child of God at all. When the ways of Zion mourn, the harps of the sons and daughters of Zion are unstrung. Therefore, keep good watch, you who like the eight disciples are charged as sentinels at the threshold of the Garden.

But you three, watch inward. Look at Christ. "Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." Watch the Savior, and watch with the Savior. Brothers and Sisters, I should like to speak this to you so emphatically that you would never forget it. Be familiar with the Passion of your Lord! Get right up to the Cross. Do not be satisfied with that, but get the Cross on your shoulders; get yourself bound to the Cross in the spirit of the Apostle when he said, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." I do not think that I have had sweeter work to do for a long time than when, a few weeks ago, I was looking over all the hymn writers and all the poets I knew of for hymns upon the Passion of the Lord. I tried to enjoy them as I selected them, and to get into the vein in which the poets were when they sung them. Believe me, there is no fount that yields such sweet water as the fount that springs from Calvary just at the foot of the Cross. Here it is that there is a sight to be seen more astounding and more ravishing than even from the top of Pisgah! Get into the side of Christ; it is a cleft of the Rock in which you may hide until the tempest is passed. Live in Christ; live near to Christ; and then, let the conflict come, and you will overcome even as He overcame, and rising up from your sweat and from your agony you will go forth to meet even Death itself with a calm expression on your brow, saying, "My Father, not as I will, but as You will."—

"My God, I love You; not because
I hope for Heaven thereby,
Nor because they who love You not
Must burn eternally.
You, O my Jesus, You did me
Upon the Cross embrace;

For me did bear the nails and spear,
And manifold disgrace;
And griefs and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony;
Yes, death itself—and all for me
Who was Your enemy.
Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
Should I not love You well?
Not for the hope of winning Heaven,
Nor of escaping Hell;
Not with the hope of gaining anything,
Nor seeking a reward;
But as You Yourself have loved me,
O ever-loving Lord.
Even so I love You, and will love,
And in Your praise will sing;
Because You are my loving God,
And my Eternal King."

I hope that this meditation may be profitable to some tried Christians, and even to impenitent sinners likewise. Oh that the pictures I have been trying to draw might be seen by some who will come and trust in this wondrous Man, this wondrous God, who saves all who trust in Him. Oh, rest on Him! "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Do but trust Him, and you are saved. I do not say you shall be saved some day, but you are saved tonight! The sin which was on your shoulders heavy as a burden when you came into this house, shall all be gone. Look now to Him in the Garden, on the Cross, and on the Throne. Trust Him; trust Him; trust Him now; trust Him only; trust Him wholly—

"Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!"

May the Lord bless you, everyone in this assembly, and at the Table may you have His Presence. Amen.

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SIN LAID ON JESUS
NO. 694

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 10, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6.

THE verse opens with a confession of sin *common* to all the persons intended in the verse. The whole of the Elect people of God seem to me to be here represented; they have all fallen, those of them who have lived to years of responsibility have all actually sinned, and therefore in common chorus they all say from the first who entered Heaven to the last who shall enter there, "All we like sheep have gone astray." But the confession, while thus hearty and unanimous, is also *special* and particular—"We have turned everyone to his own way." There is a peculiar sinfulness about every one of the individuals; all are sinful, but each one with some special aggravation not found in his fellow. It is the mark of genuine repentance that while it naturally associates itself with other penitents, it also feels that it must take up a position of loneliness. "We have turned everyone to his own way" is a confession importing that each man had sinned against light peculiar to himself, or sinned with an aggravation which he at least could not perceive in his fellow. This confession being thus general and particular has many other traits of excellence about it of which we cannot just now speak. It is very *unreserved*. You will observe that there is not a single syllable by way of excuse; there is not a word to detract from the force of the confession. It is moreover singularly *thoughtful*, for thoughtless persons do not use a metaphor so appropriate as the text—"All we like sheep have gone astray." Not like the ox which "knows its owner," nor even like the ass which "remembers its master's crib," nor even like the swine, which, if it wanders all day long comes back to the trough at night, but, "like sheep we have gone astray," like a creature cared for but not capable of grateful attachment to the hand that cares for it; like a creature wise enough to find the gap in the hedge by which to escape, but so silly as to have no propensity or desire to return to the place from which it had perversely wandered. Like sheep habitually, constantly, willfully, foolishly, without power to return, we have gone astray. I wish that all our confessions of sin showed a like thoughtfulness, for to say that we are "miserable sinners" may be an increase of our sin unless we have really felt it, to use words of general confession without our soul entering into them may be but a "repentance that needs to be repented of," an insult and mockery to high Heaven vented in that very place where there ought to have been the greatest possible tenderness and holy fear.

I like the confession of the text because it is a giving up of all pleas of self-righteousness. It is the declaration of a body of men who are guilty, consciously guilty; guilty with aggravations, guilty without excuse; and here they all stand with their weapons of rebellion broken in pieces,

saying unanimously, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way." I hear no dolorous wailings attending this confession of sin, for the next sentence makes it almost a song—"The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." It is the most grievous sentence of the three; but it is the most charming and the most full of comfort. Strange is it that where misery was concentrated mercy reigned, and where sorrow reached her climax there it is that a weary soul finds sweetest rest. The Savior bruised is the healing of bruised hearts.

I want now to draw the hearts of all who feel the confession to the blessed Doctrine set forth in the text—the Lord has laid on Christ the iniquity of us all.

We shall take the text first by way of *exposition;* then by way of *application;* and we shall conclude with serious and I hope profitable *contemplation*.

I. First, let us consider the text by way of EXPOSITION.

1. It may be well to give the marginal translation of the text—"Jehovah has made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all." The first thought that demands notice is the *meeting of sin*. I may compare sin to the rays of some evil sun. Sin was scattered throughout this world as abundantly as light, and Christ is made to suffer the full effect of the baleful rays which stream from the sun of sin. God as it were holds up a burning glass, and concentrates all the scattered rays in a focus upon Christ. That seems to be the thought of the text, "The Lord has focused upon Him the iniquity of us all." That which was scattered abroad everywhere is here brought into terrible concentration—upon the devoted head of our blessed Lord all the sins of His people were made to meet. Before a great storm when the sky is growing black and the wind is beginning to howl, you have seen the clouds hurrying from almost every point of the compass as though the great day of battle were come, and all the dread artillery of God were hurrying to the field. In the center of the whirlwind and the storm, when the lightning threatens to set all Heaven on a blaze, and the black clouds labor to conceal the light of day, you have a very graphic metaphor of the meeting of all sin upon the Person of Christ; the sin of the ages past and the sin of the ages to come, the sins of those of the Elect who were in heathendom, and of those who were in Jewry; the sin of the young and of the old, original sin and actual, all made to meet, all the black clouds concentrated and brought together into one great tempest that it might rush in one tremendous tornado upon the Person of the great Redeemer and Substitute.

As when a thousand streams dash down the mountainside in the day of rain, and all meet in one deep swollen lake; that lake the Savior's heart, those gushing torrents are the sins of us all who are here described as making a full confession of our sins. Or to take a metaphor not from Nature but from commerce; suppose the debts of a great number of persons to be all gathered up, the scattered bonds and bills that are to be honored or dishonored on such-and-such a day, and all these laid upon one person who undertakes the responsibility of meeting every one of them without a single assistant. Such was the condition of the Savior; the Lord made to meet on Him the debts of all His people so that He became responsible for all the obligations of every one of those whom His Father had given Him, whatever their debts might be. Or if

these metaphors do not suffice to set forth the meaning, take the text in our own version, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," put upon Him as a burden is laid upon a man's back all the burdens of all His people; put upon His head as the High Priest of old laid upon the scapegoat all the sin of the beloved ones that He might bear them in His own Person. The two translations, you see, are perfectly consistent; all sins are made to meet, and then having met together and been tied up in one crushing load the whole burden is laid upon Jesus Christ.

2. The second thought is that *sin was made to meet upon the suffering Person of the innocent Substitute.* I have said "the suffering Person" because the connection of the text requires it. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." It is in connection with this, and as an explanation of all His grief, that it is added, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The Lord Jesus Christ would have been incapable of receiving the sin of all His people as their Substitute had He been Himself a sinner—but He was, as to His Divine Nature, worthy to be hymned as, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," and as to His Human Nature, He was by miraculous conception free from all original sin, and in the holiness of His life He was such that He was the spotless Lamb of God, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing—and therefore He was, on all accounts, capable of standing in the place of sinful men. The Doctrine of the text is that Jesus Christ, who was Man of the substance of His mother, and who was, nevertheless, very God of very God, most true and glorious Creator and Preserver, did stand in such a position as to take upon Himself the iniquity of all His people, remaining still Himself innocent; having no personal sin, was incapable of any, but yet taking the sin of others upon Himself—it has been the custom of theologians to say—by *imputation;* but I question whether the use of that word, although correct enough as it is understood by us, may not have lent some color to the misrepresentations of those who oppose the Doctrine of Substitution.

I will not say that the sins of God's people were imputed to Christ, though I believe they were; but it seems to me that in a way more mysterious than that which imputation would express, the sins of God's people were actually laid upon Jesus Christ so that in the view of God, not only was Christ treated as if He had been guilty, but the very sin itself was, I know not how, but according to the text it was somehow laid upon the head of Christ Jesus—"For He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Is it not written, "He shall bear," not merely the punishment of their sin, nor the imputation of their sin, but, "He shall bear their iniquities"? Our sin is laid on Jesus in even a deeper and truer sense than is expressed by the term imputation. I do not think I can express it, nor convey the idea that I have in my own mind, but while Jesus never was and never could be a sinner—God forbid that the blasphemous thought should ever cross our lips or dwell upon our heart—yet the sin of His people was literally and truly laid upon Him.

3. It has been asked, *Was it just that sin should thus be laid upon Christ?* Our reply is fourfold. We believe it was rightly so, first, because *it was the act of Him who must do right,* for "the Lord has laid on Him the

iniquity of us all." Jehovah, He against whom the offense was committed, has ordained that the sin of the people spoken of should be laid upon Christ. To impugn this, then, would be to impugn the justice of Jehovah, and I pray that none of us may have the boldness to do that. Shall the potsherd venture to strive with the potter? Shall the thing formed contend with the Creator of all things? Jehovah did it, and we accept it as being right, caring not what men may think of Jehovah's own deed. Remember, moreover, that *Jesus Christ voluntarily took this sin upon Himself.* It was not forced upon Him. He was not punished for the sins of others with whom He had no connection, and against His will; but He bore our sins Himself in His own body on the tree, and while bearing it said, "No man takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." It was according to His own eternal agreement made with the Father on our behalf; it was according to His own expressed desire, for He had a baptism to be baptized with, and He was straitened until it was accomplished; and therefore whatever of injustice might be supposed, it is removed by the fact that He who was mainly concerned in it was Himself voluntarily placed in such a position.

But I would have you remember, Beloved, *that there was a relationship between our Lord and His people,* which is too often forgotten, but which rendered it natural that He should bear the sin of His people. Why does the text speak of our sinning like sheep? I think it is because it would call to our recollection that *Christ is our Shepherd.* It is not, my Brothers and Sisters, that Christ took upon Himself the sins of strangers. Remember that there always was a union of a most mysterious and intimate kind between those who sinned and the Christ who suffered. What if I say that it is not unjust but according to Law that when a woman gets into debt her husband should bear it? And the Church of God sinning it was but right that her Husband, who had espoused her unto Himself, should become the debtor on her behalf. The Lord Jesus stood in the relationship of a married husband unto His Church, and it was not, therefore, a strange thing that He should bear her burdens. It was natural for the next of kin to redeem the inheritance, it was most seemly that Immanuel, the next of kin, should redeem His lost Church by His own blood. Remember that there was a union closer even than the marriage bond, for we are members of His Body. You shall not punish this hand of mine without making the conscious nature which dwells in the brain to suffer also; and does it seem strange to you that when the inferior members of the body have transgressed, the head should be made to suffer? It seems to me, my Brothers and Sisters, that while Substitution is full of Divine Grace, it is not unnatural but according to the laws of everlasting love.

Yet there is a fourth consideration that may remove the difficulty of sin being laid upon Christ. It is not only that God laid it there, that Jesus voluntarily took it, and moreover was in such a union with His Church that it was *natural* that He should take it, but you must remember that *this plan of salvation is precisely similar to the method of our ruin.* How did we fall, my Beloved? Not by any one of us actually ruining himself. I grant you that our own sin is the ground of ultimate punishment, but the ground of our original fall lay in another. I had no more to do with my fall than I have to do with my restoration; that is to say, the Fall

which made me a sinner was wholly accomplished long before I was born by the first Adam, and the salvation by which I am delivered was finished long before I saw the light by the second Adam on my behalf. If we grant the Fall—and we must grant the fact, however we may dislike the principle—we cannot think it unjust that God should give us a plan of salvation based upon the same principle of Federal Headship. Perhaps it is true, as has been conjectured by many, that because the fallen angels sinned one by one, there was no possibility of their restoration; but man's sinning, not one by one in the first place, but transgressing under a covenant head, provided an opportunity for the restoration of the race by another Covenant Headship. At any rate we, accepting the principle of the Federal Headship in the Fall, joyfully receive it as to the restoration in Christ Jesus. It seems right, then, on these four grounds, that the Lord should make the sins of all His people to meet upon Christ.

4. I beg you to observe in the fourth place, *that lying upon Christ brought upon Him all the consequences connected with it.* God cannot look where there is sin with any pleasure, and though as far as Jesus is Personally concerned, He is the Father's beloved Son in whom He is well pleased; yet when He saw sin laid upon His Son, He made that Son cry, "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?" It was not possible that Jesus should enjoy the light of His Father's Presence while He was made sin for us—consequently He went through a horror of great darkness, the root and source of which was the withdrawing of the conscious enjoyment of His Father's Presence. More than that, not only was the Light of God withdrawn, but positive sorrow was inflicted. God must punish sin, and though the sin was not Christ's by His actually doing it, yet it was laid upon Him, and therefore He was made a curse for us. What were the pangs which Christ endured? I cannot tell you. You have read the story of His Crucifixion. Dear Friends, that is only the shell, but who shall describe the inward kernel? It is certain that Christ not only bore all that humanity could bear, but there was a Deity within which added extraordinary strength to His Humanity and enabled it to bear far more than it would otherwise have been able to endure. I doubt not that in addition to this the Godhead within gave a peculiar sensitiveness to the holiness of Christ's Nature, so that sin must have become even more abhorrent to Him than it would have been to a merely perfect man. His griefs are worthy to be described according to the Greek Liturgy as "unknown sufferings." The height and depth, the length and breadth of what Jesus Christ endured no heart can guess, nor tongue can tell, nor can imagination reveal; only God knows the griefs to which the Son of God was put when the Lord made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all. To crown all there came Death itself. Death is the punishment for sin, and whatever it may mean, whatever over and beyond natural death was intended in the sentence, "In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die," Christ felt. Death went through and through Him until "He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." "He became obedient to death, even to the death of the Cross."

5. Dear Friends, for a moment think of the result of all this. Sin meets on Christ and Christ is punished for sin, and what then? Why then sin is put away. If the penalty is endured, Justice asks no more. The debt discharged—there is no debt; the claim made and the claim met—the

claim ceases to be. Though we could not meet that claim in our proper persons, yet we have met it in One who is so united and allied to us that we are in Him even as Levi was in the loins of Abraham. Jesus, Himself, is also free. Upon Him the gathered tempest has spent itself, and not a single cloud lingers in the serene sky. Though the waters came, His Love has dried them up; His suffering has opened the sluices, and made the floods forever spend themselves. Though the bills were brought He has honored them all, and there is not one outstanding account against a single soul for whom He died as a Substitute.

6. We cannot close the exposition of this verse without remarking upon the *"us"* here intended. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of *us* all." It is usually conceded by us who hold the Doctrine of Particular Redemption that there was in the death of Christ very much of generality and universality. We believe that the Atonement of Christ was Infinite in value, and that if Christ had decreed to save every man of woman born, He need not have suffered another pang; there was sufficient power in His Atonement, if He had so willed it, to have redeemed the entire race. We believe, also, that by the death of Christ there is a general and honest invitation given to every creature under Heaven in terms like these—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." We are not prepared, however, to go an inch beyond that. We hold that from the very nature of the satisfaction of Christ it could not have been made for any but for His elect; for Christ either did pay the debts of all men or He did not; if He did pay the debts of all men they are paid, and no man can be called to account for them. If Christ were the Surety of every man living, then how in the name of common justice is Christ to be punished, and man punished, too? If it is replied that the man would not accept the Atonement, then I ask again, Was there a satisfaction given, for if so, it was given whether the man accepts it or not, or else satisfaction by itself is powerless until man puts efficacy in it, which is preposterous to suppose. If you take away from us the fact that Christ did really satisfy for those for whom He stood, we cry like Jacob, "If I am bereaved I am bereaved."

You have taken away all that is worth having, and what have you given us in its place? You have given us a Redemption which confessedly does not redeem; you have given us an Atonement which is made equally for the lost in Hell and for the saved in Heaven; and what is the intrinsic value of such an Atonement? If you tell us that Christ made a satisfactory Atonement for every one of the human race, we ask you how it was that He made an Atonement for those that must have been in the flames of Hell thousands of years before He came into this world? My Brothers and Sisters, ours has the advantage of universality in its proclamation and in its *bona fide* offer, for there is no man living who shall believe in Jesus who shall not be saved by Christ; but it has a greater advantage than this; namely, that those who do believe are saved by it, and they know that Christ made such an Atonement for them that for them to be punished for sin would be as much a violation of Justice as it would of Mercy! O my Soul! You know this day that all your sins were made to meet on Christ, and that He bore the punishment for them all!—

"He bore that we might never bear,

His Father's righteous ire."

Here is a rock to stand on, a safe resting place for those who trust in Jesus. As for you who trust Him not, your blood be upon your own heads! If you trust Him not, you have no part nor lot in this matter, you shall go down to your own punishment to bear it yourselves; the Wrath of God abides on you; you shall find that the blood of Jesus has made no Atonement for your sins. You have rejected the invitation that was given, and put far from you the Cross of Christ, and upon your heads the pardoning blood shall never drop, and for you it shall never plead, but you must perish under the Law because you refuse to be saved under the Gospel.

II. Let us come briefly to the APPLICATION.

Dear Hearer, a friend now puts a question to you. There is a countless company whose sins the Lord Jesus bore; *did He bear yours?* Do you wish to have an answer? Are you unable to give one? Let me read this verse to you and see if you can join in it. I do not mean join in it saying, "That is true," but feeling that it is true in your own souls. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." If there is in you this morning a penitential confession which leads you to acknowledge that you have erred and strayed like a lost sheep, if there is in you a personal sense of sin which makes you feel that you have turned to your own way, and if now you can trust in Jesus, then a second question is not needed; the Lord has laid on Him your iniquity, and the iniquity of all such as confess their sin and look alone to Christ. But if you will not trust Christ, I cannot say to you that the Lord has taken the sin from you and laid it upon Christ, for in my soul I know that living and dying as you now are, that sin of yours will rise up in judgment against you to condemn you. Dear Friend, I will venture to ask you, are you reconciled to God's way of getting rid of sin? Do you feel any joy in your heart at the thought of Jesus bearing sin for you and suffering for you? If you do not, I cannot offer you the consolation which the text gives to those who submit to it. But let me ask you, do you mean to bear your sin yourself? Do you know what that means? Jesus smarted when He bore the sin of His people, but what a smart shall yours be when you bear your own! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God."

There are some nowadays who are mighty angry at the Doctrine of Everlasting Punishment. I, too, might be angry at it if it were an invention of man; but when it is most certainly threatened in God's Book, it is vain for me to kick against the pricks; my question should not be, "How can I dispute against it?" but "How can I escape from it?" Dear Hearer, do not venture into God's Presence with your sins upon yourself; even our God is a consuming fire, and His fury will break forth against you when you come to stand there! Have you an imagination that your own merits may make Atonement for sin? I pray you think about what Christ had to do before He could cast sin off from Himself, what griefs He bore, through what an ocean of wrath He passed; and do you think that your poor merits, if they are merits, can ever avail to do what the Savior suffered so much to accomplish? Do you hope to escape without a punishment? If you do, let me pray you to think the matter over, for if God smote His own Son, do you think He will permit you to go scot-free?

If the King of Glory, when He only takes others' sins upon Him, must die, what do you think will become of you, poor worm of the dust? Do you think that God will be unjust in order to save you? Do you suppose that He will forego His own sentence because you do not choose to be saved by a plan which is both just to Him and safe to you? Shall God be unjust to pander to your fancies, or indulge your lusts? Sinner, bow the knee to this plan of salvation, for let it be known to you—and I speak now, knowing what I say, and coolly, too—there is no other plan of salvation under Heaven! There may be other ways of salvation preached, but other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the Righteous. If you shall struggle after salvation individually, and hope to get to Heaven apart from the Headship of Christ, you may struggle, but you shall be like the Jews of old who had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge; if you shall be going about to establish your own righteousness, but not submitting yourself to the Righteousness of Christ, you shall perish.

But let me ask you, does not this plan commend itself to you? If I trust Jesus, this is to me the evidence that He took my sins and suffered in my place. Oh the joy it gives me! I speak to you honestly of my own experience now; there is no Doctrine that fires my soul with such delight as that of Substitution. The Doctrine of Atonement, as it is often preached, is a hazy, misty doing of something by which the Law is honored, or perhaps dishonored, for I scarcely know which to call it—this yields me no joy. But when I know that Christ was literally and positively, not metaphorically and by way of figure, but literally and positively the Substitute for Hs own people, and when I know that trusting in Him I have the evidence of being one of His people, why my soul begins to say, Now let me live! I'm clean, through Jesus' blood I'm clean. Now let me die, for I shall boldly stand in the Day of Resurrection through Jesus my Lord. Why, Soul, it seems to me as if it were enough to make you leap into the arms of Christ Crucified! Covered with blood for you! Disinterestedly suffering for His own enemies that they might live! Oh stay not away!—

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesus' wounds;
This is the welcome Gospel-day,
Wherein Free Grace abounds.
God loved the Church, and gave His Son
To drink the cup of wrath;
And Jesus says He'll cast out none
Who come to Him by faith."

III. Now consecrate a few minutes to hallowed CONTEMPLATION.

1. You do not want talk, you want thought—I will give you four things to think of. The first is *the astounding mass of sin that must have been laid on Christ.* Now do not jump at it, and say, "Yes, the sins of the millions of His Elect." Do not leap at that, get at it by degrees. Begin with your own sin. Have you ever felt that—your own sin? No, you never felt the full weight of it; if you did you would have been in Hell. It is the weight of sin that makes Hell. Sin bears its own punishment in its own weight. Do you remember when you felt that the pains of Hell got hold upon you, and you found trouble and sorrow? That hour when you called upon the name of the Lord, saying, "O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my

soul!" Then you only felt as it were the little end of your sins, but ALL your sins, what must they weigh? How old are you? You know not how old you may be before you enter into rest, but all the sins of all your years He carried. All the sins against light and knowledge, sins against Law and Gospel, weekday sins, Sunday sins, hand sins, lip sins, heart sins, sins against the Father, sins against the Son, sins against the Holy Spirit, sins of all shapes, all laid upon Him; can you get the thought now? Now multiply that. Think of the sins of all the rest of His people; persecutions and murders at the door of such an one as Saul of Tarsus; adultery at the door of David—sins of every shape and size, for God's Elect have been among the chief of sinners; those whom He has chosen have not been the best of men by nature, but some of them the very worst, and yet Sovereign Grace delighted to find a home for itself where seven devils had dwelt before, no, where a legion of devils held their carnival.

Christ looks abroad among the sons of men, and while a Pharisee is passed by, Zaccheus the publican is selected—and the sins of all these with their full weight laid upon Him. The weight of sin would have crushed all these into Hell forever, and yet Christ bore all that weight; and what if I venture to say the very eternity and infinity of wrath that was due for all that mass of sin, the Son of God marvelously sustained by the Infinity of the Godhead within, bore and sustained the whole? I would like to stop a minute and let you turn it over, but when you go home perhaps you will spend half an hour very profitably in thinking that—

"The enormous load of human guilt
Was on my Savior laid;
With woes as with a garment He
For sinners was arrayed."

2. The next subject I offer you for contemplation is this, *the amazing Love of Jesus which brought Him to do all this.* Remember Paul's way of putting it. "Scarcely for a righteous (or strictly just) man will one die; perhaps for a good (or benevolent) man one might even dare to die; but God commends His Love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly." When Christ has renewed us by His Spirit, there may be a temptation to imagine that some excellency in us won the Savior's heart; but, my Brothers and Sisters, you must understand that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. Not that infant washed and swaddled, not that fair maiden with the jewel in her ear, and with the pure golden crown upon her head, not that lovely princess, presented like a chaste virgin to her husband; no, that was not what Jesus saw when He died. He saw all that in the glass of His Prescience, but the actual condition of that fair maid was very different when He died for her; she was cast out, unwashed, unsalted, unwrapped, in her blood, a foul, filthy thing.

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, there is no filthy thing under Heaven as filthy as a filthy sinner. When there was not a ray of beauty to be discovered in us, when neither without nor within a single thing could be found to commend us, but we were morally altogether abhorrent to the Holy Nature of Christ, then—oh wondrous Grace!—He came from the highest Heaven that the mass of our sin might meet on Him! I met with this question the other day, which seemed a novel one to me. The

question was asked thus: "Suppose you had a child that had leprosy, or some other foul disease. Suppose this dear child of yours was infected and contaminated to the most loathsome degree in every part, till the eyes were blinded and the hands were rotting, and the heart was turning to stone, and the whole body was covered with wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. Now, suppose there were no cure for this child but for your perfectly sane and healthy soul, supposing it to be such, to be put into that child's body, and for you to bear that child's diseases instead of that child; would you consent to it?" I can suppose a mother's love yielding even to that; but the more disgusted you had been with those putrefying sores, the more terrible would the task become. Now that only touches the fringe of the work which Jesus did for us when He Himself took our sins and bore our sicknesses. Such a wonderful union is there between Christ and the sinner that I venture to say there are some expressions in the New Testament and in the Old with regard to Christ's connection with the sin of man that I would not dare to use except as direct quotations from Holy Writ; but being there you shall see how wondrously the Love of Jesus Christ induced Him to take upon Himself our sad condition and plight. But, oh the Love! Oh the Love! No, I will not speak of it; you must muse upon it. Silence is sometimes the best eloquence; and it will be best for me to say to you, oh the depths of the Love of Jesus! Unsearchable, past finding out! O, that God over all, blessed forever, should have laid on Him the iniquity of us all!

3. Wonder of wonders that I need another minute to set you thinking on another subject, *the matchless security which this plan of salvation offers.* I do not see at what point a man is vulnerable who can feel and know that Christ has borne his sin. I look at the Attributes of God, and though to me, as a sinner, they all seem bristling as with sharp points, thrusting themselves upon me; yet when I know that Jesus died for me, and did literally take my sin, why do I fear the attributes of God? There is Justice, sharp and bright, like a lance; but Justice is my friend. If God is Just, He cannot punish me for sin for which Jesus has offered satisfaction. As long as there is Justice in the heart of Deity, it cannot be that a soul justly claiming Christ as his Substitute can, himself, be punished. As for Mercy, Love, Truth, Honor, everything matchless, Godlike and Divine about Deity, I say of all these, "You are my friends; you are all guarantees that since Jesus died for me so I cannot die." How grandly does the Apostle put it! It seems to me as if he never was worked up by the Holy Spirit to such a pitch of eloquence as when speaking about the death and Resurrection of the Savior, he propounds that splendid question, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's Elect?" There, where Eternal Justice sits upon a flaming Throne, the Apostle gazes with eyes undimmed into the ineffable splendor, and though someone seems to say, "The Judge will condemn," he replies, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's Elect? It is God who justifies." Can He justify and then condemn us? He justifies those for whom Christ died, for we are justified by His Resurrection. How then shall He condemn?

And then he lifts up his voice yet again—"Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, rather who is risen again, who sits at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." On other grounds a man must feel unsafe, but here he may know himself sure. Go, you who

will, and build upon your sandy foundations; run up your superstructures till they are as high as Babel's tower, and tumble about your ears unable to support their own weight; but as for me, my soul shall rest upon this solid Rock of Substitution; and clinging to the Rock with confident resolve, I know that I have no cause for fear since Jesus died for me.

4. Lastly, I desire to give you as a subject for contemplation, and I pray you do not forget it, this question, *What then are the claims of Jesus Christ upon you and upon me?* Brothers and Sisters, I have sometimes wished to be eloquent; never when I had a cause to plead in which I was myself involved, but when I have had to speak for Jesus. But indeed, there is no need of eloquence here. Your hearts shall be the pleaders, His agonies shall be the plea. Did our blessed Lord take your sin, my Brothers and Sisters, and suffer all its terrific consequences for you, so that you are delivered? By His blood and wounds, by His death, and by the Love that made Him die, I implore you treat Him as He should be treated! Love Him as He should be loved! Serve him as He should be served! You will tell me that you have obeyed His precepts. I am glad to hear it. Are you sure that you have? "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Have you kept the ordinances as He delivered them? Have you sought to be obedient to Him in all respects? In all your Lord's appointed ways have you scrupulously pursued your journey? If you can say this I am not content; it does not seem to me that with such a Leader as Christ, mere obedience should be all.

Napoleon singularly enough had power to get the hearts of men twisted and twined about him; when he was in his wars there were many of his captains and even of his private soldiers who not only marched with the quick obedience of a soldier wherever they were bid, but who felt an enthusiasm for him. Have you never heard of him who threw himself in the way of the shot to receive it in his bosom to save the Emperor? No obedience, no law could have required that of him, but enthusiastic love moved him to it; and it is such enthusiasm that my Master deserves in the very highest degree from us. It is out of and beyond all categories of law, it is far exceeding all that law ventured to ask, and yet not more than expected for all that, for you are not under the Law but under Grace; and you will do more out of love than you would have done out of the compulsion of demand. What shall I do for my Master? What shall I do for my Lord? How shall I set Him forth? My Brothers and Sisters, my highest aim before God, next to the conversion of the unconverted among you, is that you who do love Christ may really love Him and act as if you did. I hope you will never become a dead cold church. Oh may my ministry never help to lull you into such a state as that! If Jesus Christ does not deserve everything of you He does not deserve anything; you do not know anything of His claims if you do not feel that—

"If you could make some reserve,
And duty did not call;
You'd love the Lord with zeal so great
That you must give Him all."

Christ stands for me! Oh may I learn to stand for Him, and plead for Him, and live for Him, and suffer for Him, and pray for Him, and preach and labor for Him as He may help me! May I remind you each individually as you all followed your own way, and individually had some

sin to increase that burden, to pay Him individual service? Contribute of your substance to the common work of the Church, and do that constantly and as a matter of delight. Our College which is doing so much service, greatly needs and demands the help of all who love our work, and love the Lord's Truth. But in addition to that, do something for yourself, speak for Christ yourself, have some work in hand on your own account. Do, I say again, at all times assist the work of the combined body, for that will be a great work, God being in us as our life and stay, and let no man withhold of his substance from Christ's cause; but still that is not all, He does not ask your pocket only but also your heart. It is not the pence, it is the activities of the soul; it is not the shillings and the guineas and so on, but it is your very inmost soul, the core of your spirit. O Christian, by the blood of Jesus devote yourself to Him again!

In the old Roman battles it sometimes happened that the strife seemed dubious, and a captain, inspired by superstitious patriotism would stand upon his sword and devote himself to destruction for the good of his country, and then, according to those old legends, the battle always turned. Now, Brothers and Sisters, every one of you who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, devote yourselves this day to live, to die, to spend, and to be spent for King Jesus. You will be no fool, for no man ever had an ambition more worthy. You will not be devoting yourself to One who does not deserve it. You know how much you owe Him; no, you do not know, to the fullest extent, the depth of your obligation, but you know you owe Him all that you have; your escape from Hell and your hope of Heaven. Follow me this morning in these verses—

"'Tis done, the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and He is mine—
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the Voice Divine.
Now rest, my long-divided heart;
Fixed on this blissful center rest;
With ashes who would grudge to part,
When called on angel's bread to feast?
High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear;
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

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THE AXE AT THE ROOT—A TESTIMONY AGAINST PUSEYITE IDOLATRY
NO. 695

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 17, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But the hour is coming , and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
John 4:23, 24.

THE woman's conscience had been aroused by Christ's declaration of her sin. He was touching upon matters of the most vital importance, and her depraved heart naturally shrunk from the lancet. From the truth which was becoming inconveniently personal she flew to that natural resort of the carnal mind, namely, to religious discourse upon points of outward observance. Instead of confessing her sin, and asking how it may be forgiven, she said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." The carnal heart dreads the contact of spiritual Truth, and finds a most convenient way of avoiding it by running to questions of holy places, holy times, and holy customs. Jesus, to her astonishment, informs her that the question which she had asked was of only temporary importance. There had been a time when it was well to know that salvation was of the Jews, and that the rival temple of the Samaritans was an imposter; but He says in effect to her, "Woman, believe Me that question is of no importance now, for the hour is coming, yes, and now is, when the external is to be abolished and the ritualistic is to be put away, and a purer, simpler, and more spiritual worship is to take its place."

The worship which our Lord Jesus Christ established involved a change. That is implied in the expressions used. He announced to her that the hour was just then come when all questions about this or that place must cease, and be superseded by spiritual worship. Our Lord gave a very brief, but I think a very instructive description of what this worship was to be. If you carefully observe the words, you will see that it was a *distinguishing* kind of worship, for He mentions *true* worshippers. There had been but little distinction before; as long as they all passed through the same outward form they all seemed to be worshippers; but a distinction was now to be made clear and manifest. Merely outward worshippers were now false worshippers, and only those who pressed into spiritual worship were to be regarded as true. The Gospel of Christ is a great discerner and an accurate judge. Christ has the winnowing fan in His hands; He sits as a refiner; He is compared by the Prophet to the "refiner's fire" and to "fuller's soap," and therefore you see He discerns at once between worshippers and worshippers. There they stand both alike with bended heads, perhaps both repeating the same words, but the

Savior distinguishes—"there is," says He, "a false worshipper, and there is a true worshipper, and he alone who is spiritual is true."

He announces further that under the Gospel *God is to be worshipped in the Character of a Father;* true worshippers shall worship the Father. This had not been the case before. The Lord had been adored as the Adonai, and reverenced as Jehovah; but to say "Our Father which are in Heaven" remains the prerogative of the enlightened Christian who, having believed in Christ, has received power to become a son of God. True Christian worship addresses God, not merely as Creator and Preserver, or as the Great Lord of the Universe, but as One who is very near of kin to us, our Father, beloved of our souls. Jesus likewise states that Gospel worship is to be of a kind which does not result merely from the man himself, but comes from God, and is *a work of Divine Grace.* This is implied in the sentence, "The Father is seeking such to worship Him," as if no true worship would come from any man unless God sought it. True devotion under the Christian dispensation is not merely human but also Divine. It is the work of the Spirit in the soul returning to its Author, or as our hymn puts it—

"Prayer is the breath of God in man,
Returning from where it came."

These are very grave points, and draw a broad line of distinction between the living worship of the chosen of God and the dead formal worship of the world which lies in the Wicked One.

Furthermore, the Savior goes on to say that they who worship God are to worship Him *"in spirit."* No longer with the visible sacrifice of a lamb, but inwardly trusting in Him who is the Lamb of God's Passover; no more with sprinkled blood of goats, but heartily relying upon the blood once shed for many; no longer worshipping God with ephod, breastplate, and miter, but with prostrate soul, with uplifted faith, and with the faculties not of the body but of the inward spirit. We who worship God under the Christina dispensation are no longer to fancy that bodily exercise in worship profits anything, that genuflections and contortions are of any value, but that *acceptable* worship is wholly mental, inward, and spiritual.

But He adds, lest there should seem an omission in the description, "must worship Him in spirit *and in truth,"* for though we should profess to worship God only with the spirit and so despise forms, yet unless the soul shall truly love, and really adore, and sincerely bow, our worship will be as unacceptable as though it were formal and outward. See then, Brothers and Sisters, putting the whole three together, the worship under the Christian dispensation which God ordains, and which He accepts through Christ Jesus, is a worship distinguished by an inward vitality from the outward worship of the carnal mind. It is the worship of a child towards a father, feeling within himself a kinship with the Divine; it is a worship worked in us by God the Holy Spirit, because the Father has sought us out and taught us how to worship Him. It is a worship which is not outward, but of the inner man, and occupies not hands, eyes, and feet, but heart and soul and spirit; and it is a worship which is not professional and formal, but real, hearty, earnest, and so acceptable before God.

Let me give a sketch of this worship as it actually exhibits itself. A man may have been to a place of worship from his youth up, and he may have fallen into a habit of repeating a sacred form every morning and every evening, he may even have been a tolerably diligent reader of the Word of God, and yet, though this may have been continued for 60 years and more, he may never once have worshipped God after the fashion prescribed in the text. But look at him! The Father seeks him, the Truth of God comes home to his soul, and in the light of that Truth he feels himself a sinner, and feeling himself so, he cries, "Father, I have sinned." That is his first true worship. See, Brothers and Sisters, his spirit feels it, and he means what he says. All that he said before was as nothing, but that first cry, "I have sinned," has in it the vitality of worship. He hears the story of the Cross, the full Atonement made by God's appointed Sacrifice, and he prays, "Lord, I believe in Jesus, and I trust Him." Here is another specimen of true worship; here is the spirit resting upon God's appointed Sacrifice and reverencing God's way of salvation by accepting it. Being saved by the precious blood of Jesus, he cries, "Father, I bless You that I am saved, I thank You that my sins are washed away." This is true worship. Whether a man sings in the assembly, or sings alone; whether he prays aloud, or prays in silence, if he feels gratitude to God for pardon received, he offers the true worship. The whole of the Christian's life—consisting as it must of dealings with the invisible God through Jesus Christ by his heart, is a life of worship, and when at last he comes to die, you perceive that his worship will not cease with death, because it has always been spiritual, and did not depend upon the body. So that while the outward man fails him, the inward spiritual man grows more strong in devotion than ever it was before; and when at last the spirit leaves its earthly tenement, and is disembodied, it has still a song for God, and throughout Eternity its spiritual worship can continue—which worship must have been suspended if it had been connected with the body, and not with the immortal part of man.

If I understand the Savior's words, and I hope I do, not only theoretically but practically, He means that those of us who are His true worshippers must worship Him with our better and our nobler part, and our soul, with all the power she has, must pay reverence to the unseen God. Brothers and Sisters, this is the kind of worship that men will not render to God; they will render Him anything else but this; and until effectual Grace shall work such worship in man's heart it is obnoxious to him; he will worship God with robes, and incense, and flowers, and banners, but he will not consent to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

I. I shall proceed to my work by giving A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF WORSHIP, in connection with the Doctrine that we are now to worship God more manifestly than ever in spirit and in truth. It appears from Scripture that *worship before the flood* was of the very simplest form. The outward ordinances were very few; the chief of them being the offering of sacrifice. This was probably instituted by God Himself when He clothed Adam and his wife with skins of beasts; it has been thought that He then indicated to them the slaughter of beasts for sacrifice. Certain it is that the first worship of fallen man was by sacrifice. There was connected with this, no doubt, the meeting of

gracious hearts for prayer, and also the ministration of the Truth of God, for Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord; so that they appear to have had what was tantamount to a ministry, and the sons of God had appointed times for meeting. But this simple form of worship seems to have been too high, too spiritual for fallen man at first; at any rate the seed of the serpent could not endure it, for Cain, at the very first commenced a schism; instead of bringing a sacrifice by blood, he brought a sacrifice of the fruits of the ground. Perhaps he was a man of taste and desired to bring something that should look more decorous than a poor bleeding victim. He would lay those rich grapes, those ruddy fruits upon the altar, and those fair flowers that gemmed the bosom of the earth, surely he might consecrate those. At any rate he was the first man who set up taste and self as the guide in religious worship, and God had no respect unto his sacrifice. The two stood by their altars; Abel, by faith, exercising spiritual worship, offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; Cain's offering was possibly even more fair to look upon, but it was of his own invention; Abel was accepted, but Cain discarded. The ultimate result of man's sinfulness in connection with this early type of worship was general neglect of all religion. The sons of God seem to have maintained their simplicity for a time, but at last, by unholy alliances with the ungodly race, there arose a widespread neglect of all thought of God so that they were married and given in marriage, and they ate and they drank till the day when the Flood came and swept them all away.

Depraved nature thus refused to render spiritual worship. After the Flood we find worship restored in very much the same form—let us distinguish it as the *Patriarchal* method of worship. The head of a family was accustomed to offer sacrifice, and no doubt if Job is taken as a type, family prayer and household religion were maintained. But you see very early the indication that man, although he could not forget God, for the deluge had struck to the very heart of manhood an awful dread of the Most High, began to interpose symbols and visible objects between God and himself. The use of teraphim became very common; so that even in the house of Abraham's ancestors teraphs were found; and when we come down to the time of Jacob, we find one of his wives stealing her father's idols, thus proving that Laban, one of a once God-fearing family, had become a worshipper of God through the medium of images. Thus was it among those who still had some knowledge of God; but the nations, being dispersed, soon lost the pure idea of the Invisible One, and worshipped gods of their own devising. From the plagues of Egypt, which were no doubt intended to be a blow against all Egypt's gods, we find out that in addition to the worship of the calf or bull, the Egyptians paid religious reverence to flies, the river Nile, the elements, beetles, and all kinds of creatures; and throughout the world, as a general rule, through the introduction of visible symbols of the unseen Being, the Lord Himself had become forgotten, and spiritual worship had almost ceased, except in one elect household; and even there, alas, how fallen had spirituality become!

Keeping to the line of Divine Grace, we shall now introduce you to the *ceremonial* form of worship which God instituted after the more spiritual

method had entirely broken down. He saw that the children of Israel whom He loved were but a mob of slaves; their spirits had been broken by bitter bondage; like the poor African race of the present day, they seemed as a whole incapable of rising at once to mental dignity, and needed to pass through a generation or two before they could, as a nation, achieve manly self-government. So when He brought His people out of Egypt, the Lord did not try them with an altogether spiritual form of worship; because of the hardness of their hearts, among other reasons, though He was still to be worshipped as a Spirit, yet He gave them certain outward signs by which they might be enabled to understand His Character. A great deal has been made of the symbolical worship of the Jew, as if it were an excuse for *the man-made symbolism of the Roman and Anglican Antichrist*. We would remark that nothing ought to be made of it at all, now, since it has been positively declared many times in Scripture that the age of the shadow has gone, and that the age of the substance now reigns. Whatever may or may not have been the excellence of the old Jewish economy—and being Divinely ordained, God forbid we should say a word against it—yet the Apostle Paul always talks of it as being but a yoke of bondage to which we are no more to submit ourselves, being but the shadow and not the very image of the good things which were to come; and he speaks of it as a thing so passed away, that to go back to it is to go back to the rudiments, and not to go onward in the full-grown manliness of Christianity. If there were no other passage, my text might show that the ceremonialism of the Jew is no excuse whatever for ceremonialism *now,* but that we ought to stand in direct contrast to that, hearing the Savior declare that whatever may have been before His time, the hour had come when the true worshipper must worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Remember that symbolic worship was suitable merely to the infancy of God's Church, and that now, having received the Spirit of God to dwell in us, it would be as unsuitable as would the swaddling bands of babyhood to full-grown men. Besides, even while it existed it was spoken of as soon to be superseded by a new and better Covenant. It was frequently broken through by Divine Authority. Elijah though not of the house of Levi, offered sacrifice, and Prophet after Prophet, as he arose, manifested and declared by his actions that God did not intend to give the Levitical form of worship undivided sway, but that when He poured His Spirit upon special men they were to break through all ritual regulations in order to show that they were not meant to be fixed and permanent.

It is not sufficiently remembered that the most of God's people in the Jewish nation had very little to do with this symbolic worship. When they were all in the wilderness, and gathered round the one tent called the Tabernacle, they might all see the fiery cloudy pillar; but when they came into the land which God had given them, what had they, most of them, to see? Why the Temple itself the most would only see once or twice in a year. Scarcely anyone ever saw the Ark, the cherubim, or the golden candlestick; they were always within the veil, and only once in the year did the High Priest enter that sacred place. Even the place where the sacrifices were carried on continually, no one entered but the priests. So to at least 11 tribes out of 12 the ceremonies were mainly invisible. Little

was done outside the court of the priests, but the most of the sacrifices, and the typology of Judaism was as much a hidden thing as the spiritual things of God are to us at the present day; and thus there was a great exercise of the spiritual faculties, and comparatively little of outward display. Moreover, it is to be remembered that there was *nothing whatever visible for the Jew to worship.* It is not so in the symbols of that false Church which is trying to raise up and revive the beggarly elements; there men bow before a cross; a piece of bread inside a box is reverenced and treated with worship; cast-off clouts and rotten rags, called relics, are the objects of adoration; but there was nothing like this with the Jews, they did worship toward the Temple, but they did not adore the Temple, or Mercy Seat, the altar, or any other emblem.

Is it not expressly said, "You saw no similitude"? When God descended upon Sinai, and all the people worshipped there, they saw nothing which they dared to worship; God was to them still invisible, they had to exercise their mental faculties in the worship of the Invisible God. When at one time it was thought that the miraculous powers of the bronze serpent entitled it to be worshipped, Hezekiah called it Nehushtan, that is, a piece of brass, and broke it to pieces. So with all its splendor of imagery, embroidered vest, and glittering breastplate, to a great extent there was a powerful element of spirituality even about Aaronic worship; I mean, of course, only to spiritual men. David himself utterly outstripped the outward when he declared, "Sacrifice and offering You do not desire." And when he said again, "You desire not sacrifice, else would I give it You." The Prophet declares that God is weary of their sacrifices, and in another place the Lord Himself says that if we could come before Him with rivers of oil, or 10,000 of the fat of fed beasts, He would not accept us with these. To obey is better than sacrifice, is told us even under the Law, so that even there, though not as distinctly as now, the spirituality of worship was taught and declared.

But, dear Friends, what became of this accommodation of worship to the childhood of the Church? You know that very soon after Israel came out of Egypt they said, "Let us make gods that they may go before us." They could not do without a visible God. Do not think that when they set up the calf they meant to worship the calf instead of Jehovah, that would be a slander upon them; they worshipped Jehovah through the calf—that was their plea, for they said, "Tomorrow is a feast unto Jehovah." They thought to represent Jehovah by a bull, "they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass." Though severely rebuked, it was the constant sin of Israel to desire to worship God under the favorite Egyptian emblem of the bull. At last they had gone so far into idolatry that they were driven far away; and in captivity they were so chastened, and brought into such contact with the abominations of idolatry that they were heartily sick of it, and no Jew has been an idolater since. Still, spiritual worship they would not offer, and therefore fell into rigid ritualism, reverencing the mere letter of the Law, and fighting over trifling refinements of regulation and observance; so that in Christ's day they made broad their phylacteries and the borders of their garments, but they forgot the Great Spirit who is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Since that day the Lord has been treated by carnal men in one of three ways; either God is adored by outward symbols as among Brahmins, Romanists, Puseyites, and other idolaters; or else He is worshipped through ritualism, as among too many who claim to be orthodox, who contend for prearranged, and unbending forms; written or unwritten as the case may be. Or else men show an utter indifference to God altogether, and then rush into superstitious reverence for something or other which is evil, and therefore to be dreaded and spoken of with awe. This is the history of religious worship, that let spiritual worship assume what form it may, man always will, if he can, get away from it and forget his God and set up something seen, instead of bowing down before the unseen; hence the necessity of the Second Commandment in the Decalogue, "You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God," and so on. This is not a command against worshipping another God, that is the First Commandment, but a command against worshipping God under any shape, or through any medium, or under any symbol; for He is a Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth and not by symbols. Against this command the human mind is always dashing itself, and in one shape or another, idolatry is the ruling religion of mankind.

Christ comes to tell us that now His worship is to be wholly spiritual, even the altar which belongs to antediluvian times is gone, for we have an Altar of another kind; even the sacrifice which belonged to the early period has departed like a shadow because we have the Sacrifice of Christ in which to trust. As for the institutions which suited the infancy of the Church, they also have disappeared, for now Jesus would have the worship of men enlightened by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; He would have us understand that a perfect revelation demands of us, that in the perfection of our spiritual powers we should adore the Invisible God without the interference of visible signs. Now He would have us cast away all outward types and signs, except the two which He has Himself ordained, and even these are types of the Savior's Manhood and not of His Godhead at all, to be only valued because of the spiritual communion which they enable our hearts to hold with Jesus. Baptism being intended for spiritual men, that they may enter into the Savior's death and burial, and the Lord's Supper that the same persons may remember His body broken and His blood shed for them; the water, the bread, the wine being mere emblems, not to be treated with reverence, but put to their proper emblematic use.

II. I shall now, in the second place, try to ACCOUNT FOR THE EXTREME RARITY OF SPIRITUAL WORSHIP. The reason is, my Brothers and Sisters, because man has fallen. If man were what he once was, pure and holy, I cannot conceive of his needing holy places and crosses, capes, and wide sleeves, staffs, and chasubles. I cannot conceive of the temptation to bow down before a bull, or a Virgin Mary, or a wafer. Had men been unfallen, the noble creature would have walked in Paradise, and if he reclined beneath a shady tree, he would have lifted up his eyes

and said, "My Father, You have made this grateful shade, here I will adore You." Or if he had walked in the full heat of the sun, he would have said, "My God, it is Your light that shines on me—I adore You." Up yonder on the mountain's brow, or down by the gleaming river, or the silvery lake, he need build no altar, his Altar is within himself; he needs make no temple, his temple is everywhere. The morning is holy, and the evening is holy; he has no prescribed hour of prayer, it is devotion all day long; his morning bath is his baptism; each meal is his Eucharist. Depend upon it, the nearer we get back to the nakedness of worship, the nearer we get to its truth and purity; but it is because man has fallen, that as his body needs clothing, so he is always dressing up his religion.

Moreover, it is far more difficult to worship God in spirit than in form. To patter through a dozen Ave Marias or Pater Nosters is so easy, that I can nearly go to sleep over them—to repeat a form of prayer in the morning and evening is a very small matter, and one can be thinking of the shop all the while; to go to Church or Chapel so many times a week is a cheap duty, and one may still be a thief or a hypocrite; but it is difficult, very difficult, to bring the heart down to humble penitence, and the soul to holy meditation. The last thing that most people will do is think. The noblest part of our nature is still the least exercised. Humbly to tremble before God, to confess sin before Him, to believe Him, to love Him—this is spiritual worship! Because this is so difficult, men say, "No, no, let me crawl on my knees around a shrine! Let me kneel down before a pyx, [a container where Romanists keep the "Eucharist"] let me help to make a cape, or to manufacture some pretty piece of millinery for the priest to wear. Let me go every morning to the steeple house, and come out in half an hour, and feel I have done my religion." That is quite easy, but the difficult part of religion is the part of spiritual worship.

And yet again, to worship God spiritually men would have to part with their sins. There is no effect produced upon a man's conscience by his being sprinkled, or by his taking the sacraments; he can do all that and be as much a pleasure-lover, or a worshipper of mammon as he was before; but to worship God spiritually, a man must give up his sins, must overcome his pride and lust, and his evil and sexual desires must be cast out of him. Many persons might honestly declare, "I do not mind worshipping God if it consists in doing penance, or going without meat on Fridays; but if I am to give up my sins, love God, seek Christ, trust Him—I cannot attend to that." Furthermore, man, for the most part, somehow cannot get the idea of this spiritual worship into his brain. Oh the many times I have tried to preach spiritual worship here, and yet I am conscious that when I try at it I do not interest many of you, and some of you think, "if he would only give us more metaphors, more anecdotes, and so on." I say I will do that, for I believe we should speak by parable, but sometimes I do not know how to clothe these spiritual things without making you look at the clothing rather than the spirit. It is not your worshipping God by words in hymns and prayers, or sitting in a certain place, or covering your faces at certain times that is acceptable to Him; true worship lies in your heart paying reverence to Him, your soul obeying Him, and your inner nature coming into conformity to His own Nature by the work of His Spirit in your soul; and

because men can scarcely get the idea of this till the Holy Spirit gives it to them, this is a reason why it is so rare, so exceedingly rare.

There is one other reason, dear Friends, why spiritual worship is unusual, and that is because man cannot traffic in spiritual religion. The priest is up at arms directly. "Oh," he says, "spiritual! Spiritual—why they will do without me one of these days. Spiritual—why, if you tell these people that every place is holy, and that there are no holy places; and that one Believer is as much a priest as another, and that prayer is as acceptable at home as it is in a particular spot, why," he says, *"that is the end of me."* Yes, Sir, that is the end of you, and the sooner the better for the world—for of all the curses that have ever fallen upon the human race, *the priesthood is the worst!* Its claims are false, and its actions are full of deceit. In the age of witches and ghosts the priesthood might be tolerated, but he who now sets himself up as a priest is as much a common nuisance as a fortuneteller. Nothing has been such a nightmare upon the intellect of man; nothing has sat like old Sinbad the Sailor upon the back of humanity as the pretensions of the priesthood. God forbid that Christianity should even for a moment endorse the lie! Christ has put it all down. Christ says, "All you are brethren," and He says of the whole body of His elect, "You are a royal priesthood." Concerning all the saints, Scripture declares, "You are God's clergy," for that is the Greek word in the passage—"You are God's heritage." We know no clergy and no laity; we know nothing whatever now of priesthood and of the common people, for you are made priests and kings unto God to offer spiritual sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

III. Turning from that point, a third subject is this—WHY IS SUCH WORSHIP TO BE RENDERED? Why did not God ordain worship by windmills as in Tibet? Why has He not chosen to be worshipped by particular men in purple and fine linen, acting gracefully as in Roman and Anglican churches? Why not? He gives two reasons which ought to suffice. The first is, *He Himself seeks spiritual worship.* It is His own wish that the worship should be spiritual. And in the second place, He is Himself a Spirit, and is to be spiritually worshipped. Whatever kind of worship the great Ruler desires, He ought to receive, and it is impertinence on my part if I say to Him—"No, not that, but this." It is true, I may say, "I am very sincere in all this, very earnest in it. It suits my taste. There is a beauty about it; it excites certain emotions which I think to be devotional." What is all that but saying, "Great God, You have chosen such-and-such a way of being worshipped, but I will not render it to You"? Is not that in effect saying, "I will not worship You at all"? For must not worship, to be worship, be such as the person worshipped himself will accept? To invent our own forms of worship is to insult God; and every "mass" that is ever offered upon the Romish altar is an insult to Heaven, and a blasphemy to God who is a Spirit! Every time any form of worship by procession, celebration, or ceremony of man's invention is offered to God, it is offered in defiance of this Word of Christ, and cannot and will not be received; however earnest people may be, they have violated the imperative canon of God's Word; and in fighting for rubrics they have gone against the Eternal Rubric that God as a Spirit must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

The second reason given is, that God is a Spirit. If God were material, it might be right to worship Him with material substances; if God were like ourselves, it might be well for us to give a sacrifice congenial to humanity; but being as He is, pure Spirit, He must be worshipped in spirit. I like the remark made by Trapp in his commentary on this passage, when he says that perhaps the Savior is even here bringing down God to our comprehension, "for," Trapp said, "God is above all notion, all name." Certainly, this we know, that anything which associates Him with the grossness of materialism is infinitely removed from the Truth of God. Augustine said, "When I am not asked what God is, I think I know, but when I try to answer that question, I find I know nothing." If the Eternal were such an One as you are, O Man, He might be pleased with your painted windows. But what a child's toy must colored glass be to God! I can sit and gaze upon a cathedral with all its magnificent architecture, and think what a wonderful exhibition of human skill; but what must that be to God who piles the heavens, who digs the foundation of the deep, who leads Areturus with his sons? Why, it must be to Him the smallest trifle, a mere heap of stones! I delight to hear the swell of organs, the harmony of sweet voices, the Gregorian chant, but what is this artistic sound to Him more than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal? As a sight, I admire the choristers and priests, and the whole show of a grand ceremony; but do you believe that God is imposed upon by those frocks and gowns of white and blue, and scarlet, and fine linen? It seems to me as if such a notion brings down God to the level of a silly woman who is fond of silk!

The Infinite God, who spreads out the heavens and scatters stars with both His hands—whom Heaven and earth cannot contain, to whom space is but a speck, and time is as nothing—do you think that He dwells in temples made with hands, that is to say, of man's building? And is He to be worshipped with your organs, and your rood screens [ornamental altar screen], and your gaudy millinery? He laughs at them, He treads on them as being less than nothing and vanity. Spiritual worship is what He regards because He is Spirit. My Brothers and Sisters, if you could get together a procession of worlds, if you could make the stars walk along the streets of some great new Jerusalem dressed in their brightest array; if instead of the songs of a few boys or men you could catch the sonnets of eternal ages; if instead of a few men to officiate as priests you could enlist time, eternity, Heaven and earth to be the priesthood, yet all this would be to Him but as a company of grasshoppers, and He would take up the whole as a very little thing. But let me tell you that even God Himself, great as He is, does not despise the tear that drops from a repentant eye, nor does He neglect the sigh that comes from a sinner's soul. He thinks more of your repentance than of your incense, and more of your prayers than of your priesthoods. He views with pleasure your love and your faith, for these are spiritual things in which He can take delight; but your architecture, your music and your fine arts, though they lavish their treasures at His feet, are less than nothing and vanity. You know not what spirit you are of. If you think to worship my God with all these inventions of man, you dream like fools! I feel glowing within me the old iconoclastic spirit. Would God

we had men now like Knox or Luther who with holy indignation would pull in pieces those wicked mockeries of the Most High against which our soul feels a hallowed indignation as we think of His loftiness, and of that poor paltry stuff with which men degrade His name.

IV. WHAT THEN? What is the practical drift of this? Why two things.

The first is, my dear Brothers and Sisters—I mean you who have learned to worship God in spirit and in truth, who have got above the beggarly elements of the outward, and can worship Him in spirit and in truth. What then? Why, in the first place, let us be particularly jealous of anything which looks at all like going back to ceremonialism. As a matter of taste I have a great liking for noble architecture. Many an hour have I lingered in the ruins of some splendid abbey or our own majestic buildings still used for sacred worship. I have a great delight in a well-painted window. I cannot say that I like most Dissenting painted windows, because they look to me as if they were a sort of would be if you could be. I cannot say I have any kind of liking for most of our Dissenting Gothic, for it seems to me such a paltry thing to build a front just like St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey, and then as if to cheat the Lord to make the back part shabby. I cannot say I care for that kind of thing. But a really splendid place of worship I admire as a matter of taste. I like an organ very well, as a matter of musical taste. But, my Brothers and Sisters, I feel that these are times when we must stand out even against allowable things, lest going one step we should go another. I do pray that you therefore if you have any influence anywhere, always use it in favor of simplicity, and if you see at any time in the churches of which you are the members a tendency to creep on to something a little nearer, a little towards the way of Rome, cry "Halt!"

Let us go back to the barns in which our fathers worshipped, or better still to the hill side, and to the green sward than go forward to anything like symbolism which will tempt the soul away from spiritual worship. We ought ourselves to guard against falling into formalism by means of simplicity, for we may do it the one way as well as the other, by laying it down as a rule that a service must begin with prayer or begin with singing, that the preacher must preach at such a time in the service, that the service must commence, continue, and conclude in some fixed fashion. That seems to me to have a tendency to breed another form of ritualism inconsistent with worshipping God in spirit and in truth. I am afraid I have hardly Divine Grace enough to worship God for two or three hours in silence as our Quaker friends do. I do enjoy a quarter of an hour's silence every now and then; to sit quite still seems to me to be an admirable way of getting into contact with God. Our service is so much words, words, words, that I am almost afraid you get to think as much of words as other people do of banners, and flags, and so on. Now, to sit still, to get away from words, if so your heart keeps to God, is better even than preaching and singing.

Juan De Yaldes, a Catholic, but a good Protestant for all that, remarks that the vulgar in seeking to remember Christ by the crucifix do not exercise their mind but stop at the crucifix, and therefore that which was intended to be a help becomes a hindrance. So the learned get their Bibles which should help them to think upon Divine things, but being

content with having read the letter of Scripture, they often fail to reach the spiritual Truth which it contains, and so after all do not worship God. Remember that while we should be jealous of anything which would make it easy to be of formal worship which might be adopted, yet we may still, after all, have missed the main thing—the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth.

Let us make it a matter of heart-searching as to whether we, ourselves, have been in the habit of worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth. Dear Friends, I am fearful of some of you that you do not do this. If the preacher happens to be away you do not feel in so good a frame of mind; somebody else takes my place, and there are certain feeble folk among you who feel as if the Sabbath had lost its enjoyment. But *God* is here, and you might worship God as much surely without me as with me; and though the instruction received from one man may not seem so edifying as that which may come from another, and possibly may not be so, yet still if your objective is the worship of God, which should be the main object of our gathering, surely you should do that as well under the ministry of Mr. A as Mr. B. I am afraid too that many of you are content with singing through the hymns; now all that singing which is not thought-singing is of no use; you may have very sweet voices, but God does not regard your voice—He hears your heart—and if your heart does not sing you have not sung at all.

When we stand up to pray it may be that the preacher's words may happen to be suitable to your case, but it is not prayer so far as you are concerned, though it may be as far as he is, unless you join in it. Remember that if you do not put your hearts into the worship of God, you might as well be at home as here. You are better here than at home for other reasons, because you are in the way where good may come to you. But for worship's sake you might as well have been in bed as here. You who have no spiritual worship may even clog the devotions of those who have; an invisible savor of death unto death may be oozing from you, helping to pollute or to render dead the worship of those who truly adore God. At any rate, my dear Hearers, if you have not with your whole hearts loved and worshipped God, repent over it, and pray the Holy Spirit to make you *spiritual*. Go to Christ's Cross, and trust in Him; then, and not till then, will you be capable of adoring the most High God in a style in which He can accept your worship. God grant that this may be impressed upon the hearts of all of us, that we may worship God in spirit and in truth.

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TURNING BACK IN THE DAY OF BATTLE
NO. 696

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

"The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle."
Psalm 78:9.

I DO not think that it has ever been clearly ascertained to what particular historical event Asaph here refers, and I do not find that any of the commentators mention a very obscure passage in the First Book of Chronicles which I venture to suggest may give us the explanation. In the First Book of Chronicles, the seventh Chapter and the 20th verse, you read—"And the sons of Ephraim, Shuthelah, and Bered his son, and Tahath his son, and Eladah, and Tahath his son, and Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer, and Elead, whom the men of Gath who 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." This event appears to have occurred while the children of Israel were still in Egypt. It has been supposed by some that these sons of Ephraim made a raid upon the Promised Land, and attacked the men of Gath. Believing the land to be theirs by promise, they went to take it before they had Divine Authority to do so. They made God's decrees the rule of their life instead of God's revealed will, and so they soon fell into trouble—as those people always do who make that mistake—and their father Ephraim mourned over them many days. But it appears to have been rather an attack made upon them by some men of Gath. The people seem some of them to have been of Egyptian origin, and they probably made an attack upon the cattle of the men of Ephraim. These young men defended their cattle for a time, but at last—if this is the event which this Psalm refers to—it would appear they turned their backs and so fell slain. That may or may not be. Still there are other passages in history which might serve to illustrate the text.

You are aware that Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim, and probably on account of this the Ark of God was first placed at Shiloh. On the occasion when Hophni and Phineas were slain, the children of Israel, we are told, fled. It appears to have been the peculiar duty of the men of Ephraim, in whose tribe Shiloh was, to guard the Ark. It may be possible that they were set around the Ark as a bodyguard to it, but fled at the approach of the Philistines, or fell slain together with Hophni and Phineas on that terrible and disastrous day. If this is the event alluded to you will find the history of it in the fourth Chapter of the First Book of Samuel. Perhaps, however, reference is made to the whole history of the tribe of Ephraim, that though they were well armed and were dexterous men in the use of the bow, yet on many occasions they turned their backs in the day of battle. Whether any of these explanations interpret

GOD'S CURE FOR MAN'S WEAKNESS
NO. 697

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 24, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Out of weakness were made strong."
Hebrews 11:34.

SOME kinds of weakness are of God's appointment and necessarily incident to manhood; they are not sinful, and therefore we may continue to be subject to them without regret. In reference to such weaknesses it may be that after beseeching the Lord even thrice to remove them, it may be for our good that they should remain, for then will our gracious God give us in place of removing the weakness, this reply "My grace shall be sufficient for you." This is a case of our weakness being made strong, and there are many of God's saints who daily experience so blessed a privilege; they are weak, and continue weak; they have infirmities which they once wished to have removed, but which now they are content to bear, for now they are of the same mind with the apostle—they glory in their infirmity because when they are weak they are strong. But, dear friends, there is another kind of weakness which *is* sinful; a weakness which springs not from nature, but from *fallen* nature; not from God's appointment, but from our sinfulness, and out of this we should desire to be delivered. We cannot pray for strength in sinful weakness, but must earnestly plead for strength to come out of it and to be made strong. This seems to me to be the particular blessing which faith is said to have obtained in the text "out of weakness were made strong." It is the inestimable privilege of many a Christian to be strong in weakness when the weakness is only one of infirmity, but it is an equally precious gift to be made strong out of weakness when that weakness is of a sinful kind. Looking round the church at large, with as impartial an eye as we can summon, we are afraid that for the most part it is nowadays comparable to a huge infirmary rather than a camp filled with brave soldiers.

Both ministers and private members of the church are very generally weak in one way or other. They are living, but they are sickly; they are working for God, but they are working in a feeble, inefficient manner. If I look upon the camps of the Lord's enemies, whether Puseyite or Broad church, I see intelligence and vigor so apparent that I am apt to think that never was error more earnest, more active, and more intense than just now. There is a reality about the efforts of our opponents which may well alarm us, and when I look to the camp of the Lord Jesus Christ I lament a predominant lukewarmness, a want of enthusiasm and

deficiency in force, which, if it does not betoken a departure from God in heart, certainly indicates very great feebleness in the vital parts—producing comparative weakness in all the parts. I desire this morning to speak to those who are weak; weak where they ought not to be, and who feel a growing tendency to rest content in that weakness. I would stir up those who are beginning to imagine that weakness is the normal and proper state of a Christian, that to be unbelieving, desponding, nervous, timid, cowardly, inactive, heartless, is at worst a very excusable thing. I want, if God wills, to show to the sinfully weak ones that their condition is not proper at all; I want to show that it is a work of faith to lift us out of it; not to help us in our evil weakness, but to deliver us out of it and to make us strong, reversing our present condition by enabling us to be mighty in the work of God. Since the text teaches that faith is the grand cure for spiritual feebleness, I shall, first, *cite a few cases of cure;* in the second place *I shall analyze the remedy;* in the third place *I shall endeavor to administer it,* and in the fourth place *I shall say a word of praise to the Physician who prescribes it.*

I. At the outset we have said that faith is the cure for spiritual weakness, and I have to MENTION CASES OF CURE.

I shall not now cite cases from the Old Testament of bodily cures which have been worked by faith, though I might mention Hezekiah, who being sick unto death was by faith in God's promise, restored to life and his period of existence lengthened 15 years. In the apostolic times it was through faith that many sicknesses were made to fly before the healing touch of the apostles. That power of healing has probably become extinct, or is lying dormant in the church, yet there are still indications that faith has some power in that direction. I cannot but think that when honest John Wickliffe, raising himself up in the bed of sickness, said to the monks who surrounded him, expecting him to die and tempting him to recant, "I shall not die, but live to declare the wicked deeds of the monks"—I cannot but think that his faith had much to do with his cure; had he been a man of a timorous, wavering frame of mind, his sickbed might have been his deathbed, but the vital forces were all thrown into energetic action by the mental energy of his faith, and the crisis was safely passed. I do not know how far faith may still operate upon the bodily frame, for there is certainly an intimate connection between the soul and the body. Those wondrous cases recorded in the life of Dorothea Trudel of Zurich indicate the singular power of faith to assist in the cure of the body by its calming influence on the mind. That admirable woman, who has but just departed this life, became the founder of a hospital in which cures were worked mainly by the means of prayer and faith—cures which have been substantiated in the best possible manner, namely, by her enemies having dragged her before the law courts of Zurich for practicing medicine without a diploma, when she proved that the only medicine used was directing the mind to Christ, and proclaiming the gospel, by which a holy calm spread over the mind and the body derived

manifest benefit. Such cases, and others which we have noticed, go to show that if we had more faith in the living God it might sometimes be possible for the soul to so overmaster the body that out of weakness we might still, in Hezekiah's fashion, be made strong. These hints are not, however, to the point, and relate rather to a theory than to the revealed truth of God.

That faith strengthens Christians has been proved often in *the history of the church of God.* The church's weakness springs mainly and mostly from a lack of faith in her God, and in the revelation which God has entrusted to her. When men believe intensely they act vigorously, and when their principles penetrate their very souls, and become precious to them as life itself, then no suffering is too severe, no undertaking is too laborious, and no conflict too heroic. They will enter upon impossibilities, laugh at them, and overcome them, when once they know of a surety that the principles which move them are most certainly from God. This seems to me to be the great work which Luther did in his day under God the Holy Spirit's power. He brought back the church to the strength of faith, and then her whole force returned. The man knew very little of the truth of God, but upon the doctrine of justification by faith he was clear as the sun at noonday, but he was half a Romanist in most other respects. But this one all-important thing he did for the church—he made her believe in God and in God's truth with a vigorous decision which had almost ceased from among men.

Though he knew not all the weapons of the divine armory, yet the one he did know he wielded with such bravery of faith, and such tremendous dogmatism that his resolute soul shamed others into steadfastness. See the man as he goes into Worms, defying a host of devils, though they were as many as the tiles on the roofs of the houses. See him standing up in the Diet of Worms and alleging that he could not retract, so help him God! See him in his earlier days, nailing up his theses upon the church doors as sailors nail their colors to the mast, or tearing the Pope's bull in pieces, and casting it into the fire! As men resolved on conquest break down the bridges behind them, and render retreat impossible, it was the man's faith in God that helped him to do great exploits, and the church learned from him to believe that "God everywhere has sway, and all things serve His might." When the church once more believed firmly, her spirit returned to her, and like a giant refreshed with new wine, she recommenced her race.

In the modern revival under Whitefield and Wesley the restoration of faith was the source of restored strength. Those brothers, differing in doctrine as they did, had this point in common, namely, that they were intense believers in the indwelling power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the church. Men had been disputing and trying to prove or disprove everything. Sermons were frequent upon such topics as whether there was a God or not. Now you never find Whitefield or Wesley wasting time over such matters; they were so full of God's Spirit, and could see Him so

clearly everywhere at work, that they felt no need of proving it. While men were discussing as to whether the Scriptures were inspired, and men were writing books upon the evidences, these men preached the gospel and infidelity fled before them. An age destitute of spiritual life generally amuses itself by trying to prove what is not worth proving, or wasting its energy upon external things to the neglect of the inward; an age spiritually alive takes itself to the Lord's work, and treats all doubt as folly and sin. The followers of Whitefield and Wesley, instead of proving with diffidence and apologizing for the gospel with half-heartedness, came forth with, "Thus and thus said the Lord." They mounted their pulpits as monarchs mount their thrones, and they proclaimed the truth of God, and men acknowledged its power till from one end of the land to the other the dry bones arose to life and stood as an exceedingly great army. Brothers and sisters, our churches must come back to the old faith, and to a firm belief in it! If you do not believe the articles of your faith, reject them and do not be sham believers. If the doctrines which you profess are indeed true, grip them, hold them fast, get them engraved upon your souls, and burnt into your consciences. Have faith in God and the truth—that the truth of God cannot be destroyed nor God defeated. Vitality and power in your faith will soon send force and life into all the other parts of your spiritual manhood.

What has been proved upon the largest scale has been true in all other instances. For instance, *the weakness of depraved human nature* always gives way before the energy of that faith which the Spirit works in us. The sinner, aroused in his weakness, sighs dolefully—

"I would but cannot sing,
I would but cannot pray.
I would but cannot
Break the bonds of sin,
I would but cannot melt my heart
And soften it in penitence."

When the sinner is pointed to the cross, and comes to trust himself with Jesus, viewing the blood sprinkled and the righteousness worked out, then the man can pray, can sing, can melt in penitence, or can rise up in flames of love. The inability of human nature is instrumentally removed by the energy of faith; it was through believing that you became strong; if you had continued to live by work, or by feeling, you would have been still as weak as ever, but when you looked out of self to Christ and trusted Him, it was then your strength came to you.

The same is true of *subsequent spiritual weakness.* Christians who are alive unto God, and are endowed with some divine strength, are attacked at times with a spiritual, universal decline. Just as we sometimes see a strong and healthy person growing pale and wan, losing appetite and falling into sickness, until he becomes a mere skeleton because a general sapping and undermining of the constitution has come upon him—so have I seen it with Christians; they do not lose life, but they do lose all their energy, and become as listless and lifeless as some of you probably

now are in body through the heat of the air. Then they can scarcely walk, much less run, and mounting with wings as eagles is quite out of the question. Such persons will bear witness that the only way of recruiting their strength is by faith. They must come again to the first principles, and trust their souls anew with Jesus—believing over again with a novelty of energy the old doctrines of the gospel. They must go to God as to a real God in believing prayer, and then they will not long remain weak. Out of weakness faith is sure to make us strong, and the change effected in us is equal to that which we see in a man who having been long confined to his couch, at last returns to his labor showing no tokens whatever of disease.

I have still been dealing with the great principle of the text on a large scale; we will now particularize a little more. Take a few forms of weakness. Many believers who are vigorous in many respects are troubled with a hesitancy in their testimony—they cannot speak up for Jesus. Whenever they try to say a good word, nervousness, or something akin to it, restrains them. They say with Moses, "Lord, I am slow of speech." They hesitate, or are still. There is no cure for hesitancy in the confession of Christ equal to faith; observe Moses, he is so hesitating that God gives him Aaron to be his spokesman, but read through the history, and Moses is the better orator of the two. Aaron has a golden mouth, but by degrees the confidence that Moses feels in his commission enables him to rebuke Aaron; and when Aaron goes up to Mount Hor to sleep in the arms of God, Moses stands up, and in that last sermon he delivered, and that psalm he sung before the assembled multitude, you cannot detect the slightest trace of slowness of speech. The man overcome his weakness by faith—a holy faith gave him a holy courage—and the tongue once bound became unloosed. I advise some of you to try it. A strong dose of the essential oil of believing taken every morning and evening would enable you to tell sinners all around what a dear Savior you have found.

Another common weakness among Christians is timidity. Modesty is beautiful, but it may degenerate to cowardice. It is well to be humble, it is never well to be weakly fearful. Some are always afraid; they dare not try this, and dare not try that; and if they happen to be placed in office where they can influence others by their counsels, they are shockingly bad officers because they are always keeping the church back from victory from a fear of defeat. What is a sure cure for timidity? Faith, belief in the truth of God, in the right, in God, in invisible energy, in helps which we cannot see, and aids which we should not have dreamed of. This shakes off timidity. Take as a specimen Barak. Barak is slow to go up against the enemies of God till Deborah, the mother of Israel, says she will go with him. Women sometimes lend superior courage to men, and the weaker sex proves itself the stronger. Look at Barak; after he has once believed in the power of God, he marches to the fight and wins the victory, and commemorated in soul-stirring words by the poetess,

"Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song; arise, Barak, and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam." Mighty to conquer was the man who was timid to fight—when faith gave him courage, it made him triumph. Carry a vial of strong faith along with you, and a good draught thereof will drive off fainting fits. This is the true strong water, the genuine elixir, the famous cordial, the heavenly Aqua Vitae.

A frequent form of weakness is despondency which is so common in English churches as to be as much a national disorder as consumption. It is not as common among you as it was, but still more so than I could wish; we are not so joyful and frivolous as our Galician neighbors, and we are not quite so go-ahead as our trans-Atlantic friends. I am afraid as Englishmen we have a natural tendency to become despondent; I know I feel it myself, and in the circle where I move it is not at all uncommon. Brothers and sisters, despondency is not a virtue, I believe it is a vice—I am heartily ashamed of myself for falling into it—and I am sure there is no remedy for it like a holy faith in God. Asaph, of old, was very subject to this weakness, and he said to himself, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, why are you disquieted within me?" But what was the medicine he took? "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." That was the remedy, and David prescribes it too, when he says, "Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts before Him." Despondency hamstrings a man, it makes him weak in the arena of conflict when he ought to be like a well-trained athlete struggling with his foe, and contending for the mastery. Christian, beseech your Lord to increase your faith in Him, your trust in the unseen, your reliance upon His promise and fidelity, for when you get more faith, you will rise superior to that weakness, and out of the weakness you will be made strong.

Impatience too, *impatient murmuring,* is another form of Christian weakness in which we must not expect to be made strong in divine grace, but must plead for grace to get out of it. It strikes me that Job may naturally have been an impatient man. He utters many very tart and snappish things to his friends, not one whit sharper than they deserved, but he held fast to his integrity as if he had been a very Pharisee at first. But notice how strong he was and how clear of his weakness, when by divine grace, he could say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"! There was the medicine, you see, trusting in God. Job, full of faith, sitting on a dunghill, is a far more splendid sight than the Great Mogul upon his throne. I do not believe heaven and earth ever saw a more majestic spectacle than the patriarch on the dunghill covered with boils, scraping himself with a potsherd, and yet saying, "Shall I receive good from the hands of the Lord, and not receive evil?" Princes, potentates and kings, your power never reached to this, and even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed so gloriously as poor Job. Brothers and sisters, if we had more faith in God that He makes all things work together for good to them who love Him, we would not grow so impatient; we would

bear the pain, the cross, and the loss with greater equanimity, feeling, "My Father sent it; my Father overrules it; good will come of it."

Perhaps you are weary of this list of weaknesses, but I must add one more, namely, weakness in overcoming *besetting sins.* I hope we are not among those who make light of sin. A genuine Christian dreads sin; he will not say, "Is it not a little one?" for he knows that a little sin is like a small dose of a very potent poison—it is sufficient to destroy our peace and comfort. There are some sins which really seem as if we could not get the mastery over them. I will name one—a *passionate disposition.* A person who is of quick temper may get into the condition of thinking, "Well, I was born so, and cannot help it; I always shall be of a quick temper." You always will be if you think that, but it strikes me that the grace of God must have power to overcome evil tempers, and that your hope will be in believing that yours can be overcome, and in struggling to mortify this among the other affections of the flesh. I know personally men who were once very passionate, but are now gentle; they were once likely to take fire as readily as tinder to a spark, but now they would stand fire right well; and if I had to select patient men, I would select those very men who were notorious for their fearful tempers in years gone by. "Well, my dear friend," you will say, "I cannot do it, sir." No, I know you cannot, but there is one who can, the eternal God who is your helper can surely help to make you a reasonable being, and rid you of this madness, for anger is temporary insanity. Surely God can make you morally sane, and bring you back to a calm state of mind; only believe in His power, and seek to be wholly sanctified by His grace—spirit, soul, and body—and you will see that as He cast a legion of devils out of a man in days gone by, He can now cast this devil out of you so that you will not be pestered with it any longer. You may have to watch it as a householder watches a thief, but you will get it out of doors and keep it at arm's length. Oh for divine grace to get our temper under foot, and keep it there, that though it may have a tendency to rise we may keep it down. Anyway, whatever may be our besetting sin, and we all have something against which we ought to strive, there have been cases in which such weaknesses have been cured by faith. We have not time to stop to mention any modern instances, but we know many. I trust some of us could cite our own history as an instance of what faith in God can do. "Out of weakness they were made strong."

II. We will turn to our second head and ANALYZE THE MEDICINE.

The subject is so very wide that I must confine myself to one instance, and shall speak of the medicine as it would be mixed and compounded for a man struggling at very dreadful odds against a gigantic system of evil. He is very weak, but through faith he becomes strong. One of the first ingredients of faith's medicine is *a sense of right.* Everybody admits that when a man is sure that right is on his side, he finds strength in that belief. Even if two men are going to court with one another, the one who knows that his case is founded upon justice enters the court with

much more strength of mind than he who is conscious of several flaws in his suit, and only trusts to the blessed uncertainty of the law. There is truth in the old saying that "a good conscience is the best armor." It is not of very great use in a real battle for, unfortunately, bullets have no respect for saint or sinner, but when in the way they are pretty sure to kill anybody who stops them; but a good conscience is of the utmost value in the battle of principle. A man who cannot argue, yet knows he is right will somehow or other stand his ground. He says, "My opponent has more wit than I have; he understands logic better than I, but I know I am right." And to know you are right necessarily gives you strength. Faith is a belief in the rightness of that which God reveals, a trusting in its truth, and who does not understand that a man who believes, therefore becomes strong? A second ingredient is *heavenly authority*. Everybody knows that a man who is naturally weak will often act very bravely when he has authority to back him. Let the Christian combatant feel—as feel he will when he has faith—that he is armed with divine authority, and you will not wonder if from a dwarf he rises to a giant. "This," he says, "is not my quarrel; I believe it to be God's war—the truth of God which I maintain at such hazards is no dogma of my own invention, it is God's own offspring; God has sent me to fight for it—God puts the words into my mouth." A man, thus conscious that he has a mission from heaven, cannot be afraid; he must be mighty; and when a man feels, in addition to that, that God's decree appoints him to accomplish a certain end, that God's promise declares that he shall succeed, and that from the eternal nature of truth it cannot sustain defeat—then surely he stands like a rock in the midst of the billows, and he cannot waver, he casts all thought of fear to the winds. Mixed with this is a consciousness of *heavenly companionship* which makes the believer courageous. Many a man who would have been afraid to go to battle alone has marched along very cheerily because of the many thousands who are hurrying to the same battle. The Christian feels that he has the companionship of his God and Savior. Jesus' name is "Emmanuel, God with us." The best of all is God is with us. If we suffer, Jesus suffers in one of His members; if we are slandered and reproached for Jesus' sake, it is the cross of Christ which we are carrying, and Jesus bears it with us. We hear the more than angel whisper, "Fear not, I am with you." Come then, let us sing as we march onward—

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

In addition to all this, faith has *an expectation of supernatural help.* Faith hears the wheels of providence working on her behalf. Mohammed, in his earlier career, though his faith was but mere fanaticism, yet gave great courage to his men by the daring things which he said and did; as he threw the handful of dust into the air, he believed that his foes were

blinded, and his soldiers won an easy victory; he declared that he heard the noise of angels' horses as they came to the fight, and no sooner had he thus spoken than every man grew brave. Now the Christian, not in imagination, but in spiritual fact, can hear the wings of angels flying to the rescue of divine truth. Here I see today the hand of a man, but I see also with it the wing of an angel. God works for His people; the evil He hinders and restricts, the good He speeds and multiplies, and, therefore, strong in invisible succors, we must not wonder that out of weakness the believer is made strong. I must not omit one powerful ingredient in faith's life-draught, it is the *prospect of ultimate reward.* Faith bows her head in the day of battle when the poisoned arrows fly like hail. She whispers to herself, "I may fall, but I shall rise again," and she vows, by the eternal God, that when she rises it shall be with the same banner in her hand for which she fought. She knows that in the end she cannot, must not, fall—that she shall conquer. When a man fears defeat he will probably bring it upon himself, for his fear insures it; but when a man does not know how to be defeated, the little petty disasters of the way all contribute to his ultimate victory. So, Christians, you who are warring for God and His truth, I hope you will not despair because of the gloomy aspect of the present age. It may appear as if infidelity and Puseyism together would eat out the very heart of God's church, but courage, my brothers and sisters, courage. These foes will eat up one another one of these days, or there shall rise a man out of their own ranks who will be their downfall; we may yet live to thank God for the apparent retrograde movements of today, for upon this the Lord may ride to a brighter ultimate triumph.

Faith is strong because she is sure of victory. Faith takes to herself this thought, that in the victory she shall share her reward. What will men not do for a crown? Even for an ivy crown the Grecian athlete would strain every nerve; now they did it for a corruptible crown, but we for an incorruptible. Faith makes the crown of eternal life glitter before the believer's eyes; it waves before him the palm branch. Sense pictures the grave, loss, suffering, defeat, death, forgetfulness, but faith points to the resurrection, the pompous appearance of the Son of Man, the calling of the saints from every corner of the earth, the clothing of them all in their triumphant array, and the entrance of the blood-washed conquerors into the presence of God with eternal joy. Thus faith makes us, out of weakness, to become strong. Let me remind you that the essential ingredients of faith's comfort are just these—faith sees the invisible, and beholds the substance of that which is afar off. Faith believes in God—a present, powerful God full of love and wisdom effecting His decrees, accomplishing His purposes, fulfilling His promises, glorifying His Son. Faith believes in the blood of Jesus, in the effectual redemption on the bloody tree; it believes in the power of the Holy Spirit, His might to soften the stone, and to put life into the very ribs of death. Faith grasps the reality of this Book, she does not look upon it as a sepulcher with a stone

laid on it, but as temple in which Christ reigns, as an ivory palace out of which He comes riding in His chariot, conquering and to conquer. Faith does not believe the gospel to be a worn-out scroll, to be rolled up and put away; she believes that the gospel, instead of being in its senility, is in its youth; she anticipates for it a manhood of mighty struggles, and a grand maturity of blessedness and triumph; faith does not shirk the fight, she longs for it because she foresees the victory. I would compare faith to an emperor of whom we have read that he summoned his counselors and generally judged as to whether he should go to war by their opinion, but he did it in the following manner—if they warned him that it would be a very fearful war, if they said that the enemy's cities would never be taken, that the armies on the other side were too numerous to be conquered, and the provinces too extensive to be held, he would reply, "We will do it then, for if there is anything which you, gentlemen, think to be easy, it is beneath the dignity of the emperor and the troops whom he commands, but if you reckon it impossible there is a clear field for honor." Was it not a man fit to be a soldier of such a prince, who when told that the Persian arrows were so numerous that they would obscure the light of the sun, replied, "We shall fight splendidly in the shade." Surely he was akin to Alexander, who, when they said that the Persians were as the sands on the seashore, replied, "One butcher is not afraid of a whole flock of sheep." So let it be with us; let us feel that we are men of another mold than to be afraid; let us feel that believing in God we do not know how to spell "coward," and as to fear of defeat or fear of man, we give that up for the craven dogs who slink at their master's heels, and wear their master's collar, and eat the garbage which his bounty throws to them. We care not for the things that are seen; we have learned to live upon angels' diets, and to eat the bread which comes down from heaven. Our motto is, "Courage! Courage!" And our belief is that the day shall come—

"When the might with the right
And the right with the might
Forever more shall be,
And come what may
To stand in the way,
That day the world shall see."

III. The third point is to ADMINISTER THIS MEDICINE, but no time remains, and besides I cannot do it; you must go to Him who compounded it, namely, the blessed Spirit of the living God, and take with you this prayer, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief," and this other one, "Lord, increase our faith." But I will give you a few hints. Some of you are going through a present personal difficulty; you are embarrassed in money matters, or a child is sick, or the wife is dying, or some other providential trial is vexing you—you are saying, "I cannot bear it!" I will not pray with you that you may be comforted in that sinful weakness, but I will, and do beseech you to ask for faith in that Father's hand which wields the rod that you may get out of the weakness, and may now

be made strong to suffer with holy patience what your loving Father's wisdom appoints for you. Others have a spiritual duty before you, but you are shirking it because of its difficulty. You do not like to "go through the ordeal"—that is what you call it. You are disobediently timid. Now, I shall not ask God to comfort you in that weakness—you know your Master's will, and you do it not; may you be beaten with many stripes, and may the stripes be blessed to you. I will ask that, knowing your duty, you may rise out of that weakness by believing that God will help you to obey, and so out of weakness you may be made strong. Some of you are called, where you live, to contend earnestly for God and for His truth. You have many adversaries, and your weakness makes you withhold your testimony; you have been trimming a good deal; you have been worshipping that modern Diana called Charity, which is the devil in the form of an angel of light, and instead of bringing out all the truth of God, you have given up the corners of it. I shall not ask that you may have any comfort in such weakness. May you be ashamed of having been ashamed of Christ and of His cross; but I do plead with God for you that believing the very sweepings of His truth to be precious, and the very cuttings of the diamond of the gospel to be worth fighting for, you may escape from your weakness, and be made strong in life and death to boldly declare God's truth.

Some or you always doubt your Father's love, the faithfulness of Christ, and your own interest in Him. I will not comfort you in such a state; I will not pray God to comfort you while you are in it, but I do ask you to pray that you flee from such weakness. Do not doubt your God till you have cause to doubt Him. Oh, brothers and sisters, if you will never distrust the Lord Jesus till He gives you an occasion for distrust, and till there is something in His character which should rationally excite your suspicion, you will never disbelieve again! I pray you seek more faith, and you will rise out of your fears. You who are afraid of dying—and there are some such here—shall I ask that you may be made strong while in that weakness? No. I dare not. Jesus Christ did not come to give you comfort while you are under the fear of death; He came to deliver those who, through fear of death, are their entire lifetime subject to bondage. The plea shall be, therefore, that you may have such faith in God, and such a view of the Canaan on the other side of the flood, that you may look forward with delight, or at least with resignation, to the time when you shall pass the river and be forever with the Lord. The text says *out of weakness,* brothers and sisters, and oh, may God grant that some of you who have been lying spiritually on a sickbed may through this sermon be made to take up your bed and walk; may all weakness be left behind even as the child leaves the little garments of the nursery behind him when he becomes a man.

IV. My last work was to PRAISE THE PHYSICIAN, and who is this? Who is it that has taught us to believe? It is our Father who is in heaven, who has taught us and bids us trust Him—blessed be His name! Join with

me—you need not sing with those lips—let your heart sing as you say, "Blessed be our heavenly Father who has given us precious faith in Him. Source of all goodness, foundation of all confidence, we adore You for teaching us the sweet art of trusting You!" Let us also, with equal thankfulness, bless the Lord Jesus, for we had never been capable of faith in the invisible God if there had not been a Mediator by whom we might come to Him. Blessed be those wounds and those agonies, and that death which is the door of our faith in the Father's love. Blessed, moreover, be that mysterious person, the Holy Spirit, for faith is His gift, and if it is to be increased in us, He must increase it. "O blessed Spirit, be You forever praised for putting such a jewel as faith into our poor hearts; and blessed be Your power for keeping it there, for Satan would long ago have stolen it; and blessed be Your Energy which shall keep it till I am beyond the reach of the foe."

Brothers and sisters, do not let what I have said this morning merely pass your ears. I am persuaded that though I have not put it as I could wish, there is a great deal of practical value in the truths of God which I have stated. You must be strong. This is not an age in which weak Christianity will do. It is strong energetic religion that we need now, and you cannot obtain it except by gaining strong faith, and much of it. Plead for it, and then, when you shall have obtained it, the world shall feel your power, God shall be glorified, and Christ's name shall be lifted high.

You who have no faith at all may learn something here. It is only by faith that the impotence and inability of human nature is overcome, so that the soul receives Christ unto salvation. May the Holy Spirit work that faith in you to your eternal salvation, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HEBREWS 11.

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the historical reference or not, the subject in itself will furnish us with a theme for meditation.

I. We will first consider for a little while WHAT THESE MEN DID.

They turned their backs. When the time for fighting came they ought to have shown their fronts. Like bold men they should have kept their face to the foe and their breast against the adversary, but they dishonorably turned their backs and fled. This, I am sorry to say, is not an unusual thing among professing Christians. They turn back; they turn back in the day of battle. Some do this *at the first appearance of difficulty.* "There is a lion in the way," said the slothful man, "I shall be slain in the streets." They hear that there is some trouble involved in Christian service, or that some persecution may be met with in the pursuit of the Truth of God, and straightway they look before they leap, as the world has it, and turn back to the way which they suppose to be that of safety. Timorous and Mistrust come running down the hill crying, "The lions! The lions!" And thus may a pilgrim turn back towards the City of Destruction.

Others are somewhat braver. They bear the first brunt. When the skirmishers begin these are as bold as any; they can return blow for blow, and you hear them boast, as they buckle on their armor, at such a rate that you would suppose, if you did not know that boasters are seldom good at fighting, that they must certainly be victorious. During the first thrust they stand like martyrs and behave like heroes, but very soon, when the armor gets a little battered, and the fine plume on their helmet a little stained, they turn back in the day of battle.

Some professors bear the fight a little longer. They are not to be laughed out of their religion; they can stand the jeers and jests of their old companions. When they find that they are hated by the society which once loved them so much, they can put up with that, and they are very much complimented by themselves on having done it. "Cowards," they say, "are those who flee; but we shall never do that." But by-and-by the skirmishers have done their work, and it comes to a hand-to-hand fight; the struggle begins to be somewhat more arduous, and now we shall see what metal they are made of. The enemy gets hold of them, and—

"That desperate tug their soul might feel
Through bars of brass and triple steel."

Then they find that they are being hugged in the wrong place; they are touched in a tender part, and so they also turn back in the day of battle!

And, alas, sad as it is to say it—firmly as we believe that every child of God is safe, yet is it true that many who profess to be so, after having fought so long that you would suppose the next thing would be for them to rest upon their laurels and receive their crown—just at the very last they fall and turn back! We have seen gray-headed apostates as well as juvenile ones. There have been those who seemed to wear well for a time, but at last one crushing blow came which they could not bear, and they gave way before it! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, it is only those who persevere to the end who will be saved, and only those who have a true faith in Jesus Christ have a sure evidence of their election of God! These are they who shall be clothed with white raiment, and shall sit down

upon His Throne forever. But how many who say they will to do this, after all, turn back?

I may be describing—I hope I am not—some actual case here. Some of you may say, as you turn the thought over in your minds—

"My feet had almost gone.
My steps had well near slipped."

That young man over yonder was so much jeered at the other day by those with whom he works, that he felt it was very unkind, and he did think something about renouncing his religion altogether. And my other Brother yonder, who has had so many losses, has lately had such a time as he never had before, and he thinks nobody else ever had, and he cries, "God has forsaken me!" He cannot just now say, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." He thinks, "Surely I had better turn to the world; I had better leave my religion and give it up, for I am encompassed about with such a terrible conflict that I shall never win the victory!"

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, these are often the trials that God sends, and it is by these that He separates the chaff from the wheat, and lets us see who are true soldiers, and who are only the lackeys who wear regimentals, but have not the soldier's heart pulsing beneath the scarlet. God grant us Grace to be found at last men and women who turned not back in the day of battle.

If I take the history of the children of Ephraim, I should say that they turned their backs and *failed to defend the Ark.* There are some who, when they are defending the Truth of God, shun controversy. They are of such a timid disposition—a loving disposition they call it—that as soon as ever the war-trumpet sounds they find it to be their duty to attend to the baggage in the rear. They are very brave men, indeed, in that particular quarter of the conflict where it does not happen to rage; but there in the front, where the corpses are piled on heaps, and where the battle-axes drip with gore, they will never be found because they have not the courage to fight and to conquer for Jesus. As far as they are concerned the Ark of God may be taken by the Philistines because they turn their backs.

These Ephraimites ought, too, as Joshua had set the example, *to have conquered Canaan and to have driven out the Canaanites still left.* Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, there are some of you whose sins still live, because you have turned your backs upon them, but not in the right sense, for you have turned your backs against contending with sin. There is that bad temper of yours—you have given up trying to curb it. You say, "Well, you know many of God's children have bad tempers," whereas you know that this is very wicked thing to say. You ought to slay that Agag! You have no business to tolerate a bad temper. You must never have any peace with that spiteful temper, or that hasty temper of yours; you must down with it, or else it will down with you, and if you do not overcome it, it will overcome you. Rest assured that you are guilty, and that you turn your back if you do not fight with it. So too with that worldliness of yours and that lack of a prayerful spirit. If you say, "Well, I will be content to be as I am; I will not try after a high state of piety," you turn your backs, my Brothers and Sisters. You ought to slay all these Canaanites, and you must do it in Christ's name, and not spare so much as one of them, but

say, "they compass me about, like bees, yes, they compass me about, but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them."

And then, when these people turned their backs, *Canaan was not won.* So it is with you. The Lord's Kingdom is not yet fully extended, and just when you ought to be pushing far and wide the conquests of the Cross, and be letting this great city of ours know that the King reigns mighty to save, you turn back in the day of battle. There are some Christians here who are doing nothing. I would not say this, perhaps, if I were preaching on Sunday, for I thank God that I could not in my own heart say it of my own members; the most of them are doing, I believe, as much as lies in them, or if not, I hope they very soon will be. But I am persuaded that there are many other Christians who are not doing what they should do, but are shrinking from practical service. They come in here, perhaps, on a Thursday night, and get a little bit, and they go elsewhere on other evenings of the week and pick up sweet morsels and crumbs. They like feeding very well, but they do not like work so much. There is a certain little company who come here on weekday evenings, into whose ears I would like to whisper, and ask them what they are doing for Christ. They are spiritual vagrants who go from one place to another, but have no settled home where they work for the Master, and they are of very little credit to anybody. We must, all of us, have a sphere of labor, and though I am glad to see all of you, as many as like to come, yet I pray you do have your own place for your own work, and are not like the children of Ephraim who "turned back in the day of battle."

II. Having thus observed what these men of Ephraim did, we come to look at the inopportune time WHEN THEY DID IT.

They turned back, and their doing so would not have mattered much had they done it in a day of feasting. They could always be spared, then, but that was not when they did it. They always had their faces to the front when there was any feasting to be done. They turned back; when? On holidays, when the banners waved high and the silver trumpets sounded? No, they were in the front then! Exeter Hall! May meetings! How many people are in the front there and then? When there is something sweet to feed upon they do not think of turning back. But these people turned back on a different occasion; they turned back in the *day of battle*. They turned back, it seems then, just when they were to be tried. Ah, how much there is we do that will not stand trial! How much there is of godliness which is useful for anything except that which it is meant for! It is all in vain for me to say, if I have bought a waterproof coat, that it is good for everything except keeping the water out. Why, then it is good for nothing, and so there are some Christians who have got a religion that is good for every day except the day when it has to be tested—and then it is good for nothing. An anchor may be very pretty on shore, and it may be very showy as an ornament when it lies on the ship's deck or hangs from the side, but what is the good of it if it will not hold when the wind blows and the vessel needs to be held fast? So, alas, there is much of religion and of godliness, so called, that is no good when it comes to the day of trial. The soldier is truly proved to be a soldier when the war trumpet sounds and the regiment must go up to the cannon's mouth. Then shall you know, when the bayonets begin to

clash, who has the true soldier's blood in him; but ah, how many turn back when it really comes to the conflict, for then the day of trial is too much for them!

They turned back *at the only time when they were of any sort of use.* A man who has to fight is not of any particular use to his country, that I know of, except when there is fighting to be done. Like a man in any other trade, there is a season when he is needed. Now, if the Christian soldier never fights, of what good is he? That is a very remarkable passage in one of the Prophets where the Lord compares His people to a vine, and then He says of them in words of which I will give the sense, "If the vine bears fruit it is very valuable, but, if it bears no fruit, then it is good for nothing at all." An oak without fruit is valuable for its timber, and even thorns are useful, for you may make a hedge of them. Smaller plants may be used for some medicinal purposes, but the vine, if it bears no fruit, is absolutely good for nothing. "Will a man even make a peg of it, to hang a vessel?" said the Prophet. No, it is of no service whatever. So is it with the Christian. If he is not thorough and true he is no good at all; you can make nothing of him whatever; he is, to use Christ's expressive words, "Neither fit for the land nor even for the dunghill, and men cast him out." Who would enlist a soldier who knew he would turn back? And who among us would like to be in his regiment? Take off his colors, play "The Rogue's March," and turn him out of the barracks! And this is what will happen to some professors who turn back in the day of battle! Their regimentals will be torn off, and they will be excluded from the Church of God because they turned back in the day of trial and at the time when they were needed.

They turned their backs, too, like fools, *in the day when victory was to be won.* The soldier wants to distinguish himself; he wants to rise out of the ranks; he wants to be promoted. He hardly expects an opportunity of doing this in time of peace; but the officer rises when in time of war he leads a successful charge. And so it is with the Christian soldier. I make no advance while I am not fighting. I cannot win if I am not warring. My only opportunity for conquering is when I am fighting. If I run away when there is a chance of winning the crown, then I am like the ship that does not come out of harbor when there is a fair wind, or like the man who does not avail himself of the high tide to get his vessel over the bar at the harbor's mouth. I cannot win without fighting, and therefore I thank God when the trial comes, and count it a joy when I fall into manifold temptations, because now I may add to my faith one virtue after another, till my Christian character is all complete. To throw away the time of conflict is to throw away the crown. Oh simple Heart! Oh silly Heart, to be afraid of suffering for Jesus! You are, in fact, afraid of reigning with Him, for you must do the one if you would do the other. You, young woman, who are so alarmed at a little laughing, remember you cannot go to Heaven without being laughed at sometimes in the circle in which you move, or the family in which you live. He who will live a godly life in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. Since, then, this is the way to Heaven, why do you turn from it? Be not like these children of Ephraim who turned back when there was a crown to be won.

They turned back, once more, *when turning back involved the most disastrous defeat.* The Ark of God was taken. "Ichabod," the enemy cried, for the glory was departed from Israel, because the children of Ephraim turned back in the day of battle. And so, dear Friends, unless God gives you Preserving Grace to stand fast to the end, do you not see that you are turning back—to what? *To Hell!* You do not turn back merely to the world. That is what it looks like, perhaps, to you, but you really turn back to Hell! If, after having once put your hand to the plow, you look back, you are unworthy of the Kingdom of God; but what are you worthy of? Why, those "reserved seats" in Hell! Did you ever think of that? There are such, and let me quote a passage which proves it. We are told in one place of darkness "reserved" for some who were "wandering stars, for whom is *reserved* the blackness of darkness forever!" When you turn back you turn back to those reserved places where the darkness is more black, and the pain more terrible. Oh, may God save you from ever turning back in the day of battle! This, then, is when they did it—they turned back in the day of battle.

III. But now let us notice WHO THEY WERE WHO TURNED BACK.

They were "children of Ephraim," and they are described as "being armed and carrying bows," or bows throwing forth sharp arrows. *They were men of a noble parentage.* They were *the children of Ephraim.* Joshua was of that line, and he was the greatest of conquerors who led the people into the Promised Land. And you professors, you profess to be descended from our Joshua—Jesus the Conqueror—and will you turn back? Are you followers of the Savior who gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them who plucked off the hair, and are you afraid or ashamed of anything? He gave His face to be spat upon, and will you hide your faces at the mention of His name because fools choose to laugh at you? Followers of Joshua, and yet afraid? Followers of Jesus, and yet blush? God grant that we may never blush, except when we think that we ever blushed at the thought of His Son! Oh, You dear, despised, and persecuted One, I see You on Your way amidst the scoffers. One plucks Your beard; another pulls Your hair; a third casts his accursed spit into Your face; another beats You; another cries, "Let Him be crucified." They mock You with all forms of mockery. Taunt and jeer they heap upon You. They fill Your mouth with vinegar, and give You gall to drink. They pierce Your hands and Your feet, and yet You go on along Your way of kindness and of mercy! And I—what have I ever suffered compared with You? And these, Your people—what have any of these endured, or what can they endure, compared with all Your griefs? Your martyrs follow You. Up from their fiery stakes they mount to their thrones. Confessors follow You; from dungeons and from racks their testimony sounds. And, shall we, upon whom the ends of the earth are come in these softer and gentler times, shall we turn back, and say we know not the Man? O God, forbid! Keep us faithful unto You, that we, the sons of Ephraim, may not turn back in the day of battle.

Then, again, *they were armed, and had proper weapons, weapons which they knew how to use, and good weapons for that period of warfare.* And as Christians, what weapons have we? Here is this "Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Here is a quiver, filled with

innumerable arrows, and God has put into our hands the bow of prayer, by which we may shoot them, drawing that bow by the arm of faith against our innumerable foes. What weapons of holy warfare do you need better than those which this sacred armory supplies? Read the last Chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and see how the Apostle, with a triumphant glorying, takes you through God's armory, and bids you look at the various pieces of armor, and the various weapons that are provided for you. If you lose the battle, it is not for lack of being armed, and if you desert from the ranks, it is not for the lack of bows.

But what is more, another translation seems to show that these Ephraimites *were very skillful in the use of the bow,* and yet they turned back. Oh, may God grant that none of us who have preached to others, and preached to others with fluency and zeal, may ever have our own weapons turned against us. I may make a confession here now. I have read some of my own utterances and have trembled as I have read them, and afterwards I have wept over them, not wanting to alter them, not regretting them, but fearing and trembling lest I should have my own words used in judgment against me at the Last Great Day, for there can be no more dreadful thing than for a man to have known and taught the Word to others, and then to hear the Master say—just listen to it— "You wicked servant! *Out of your own mouth will I condemn you!"* O God! Condemn me out of anybody's mouth rather than out of my own. It will be a dreadful thing to have known how to use the bow, and yet not to win the victory; to have been a sort of drill sergeant to God's people, showing them how to use the weapons, and then not to have fought the battle one's self! This will be a terrible thing! Some of you know how to use this Bible. You are acquainted with it, you have studied its Doctrines, you know the points of divinity and theology, you are well-read in the teachings of God's Word—you know how to use the bow. And some of you pray very sweetly at Prayer Meeting.

Ah, Beloved, what I said about myself may well apply to you. Some of you are Sunday school teachers and others tract distributors, and you all know how to use the bow. I hope I can say to you who sit here that I have, like Saul, taught you to use the bow. We have sought to teach you young men to use God's Word both in prayer and in other exercises of your holy faith; but, Beloved, if you turn back, the art which you have learned shall rise up in judgment against you to condemn you! If as professors taught the use of God's Word you are marched out to fight, but have not courage enough for the conflict, and turn your backs and slink into inglorious ease or into vain-glorious self-righteousness, or into false glorious pleasure, oh, how terrible must be your ruin at the last! May you not be like the children of Ephraim, who, though skilled in the use of the bow, yet turned back in the day of battle! This, then, is who they were.

IV. And do you now ask—WHY DID THEY DO IT?

Why did they, indeed? We might well have been at a loss to tell, for they were armed and carried bows. What then was the reason? The Word of God tells us and gives us three reasons. You will find them in the verses following the text. "They kept not the Covenant of God and refused to

walk in His Law, and forgot His works, and His wonders that He had showed them."

"They kept not the Covenant." Oh, that great Covenant, "ordered in all things and sure," when you can fall back upon that, how it strengthens you! When you can read in it eternal thoughts of Divine Love to you, and can hear Jesus say, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand," how it encourages you to go forward! You cannot be killed, you are invulnerable, you have been dipped in the Covenant Stream that makes you invulnerable from head to foot. Why, then, should you fear to face the foe? If you forget that Covenant you will soon turn back, and so prove that you are not in it; but the remembrance of it gives strength to God's people to persevere since they feel that God's Purpose is that they shall persevere, and so win the victory. The Covenant, however, not only secures safety, but it also provides all sorts of blessings. If a Christian always had his eyes on the Covenant Storehouse he could never desert his God for the world. Will a man leave a treasury that is full of gold to go to a beggar's cottage for money? Will a man turn from the flowing stream that comes cool and fresh from Lebanon's melting snow to go and drink of some filthy, stagnant pool? No, not he, and when a man knows the treasures of Divine Grace that are in Christ Jesus, and remembers that it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell, and that He has made Him a Covenant for the people, will such a man turn back? Assuredly not, but every promise of the Covenant will enable him to face his foes and prevent his turning back in the day of battle.

Perhaps, however, the Covenant which we forget is the Covenant we feel we made with Christ in the day when we said, "My beloved is mine, and I am His," when we gave ourselves up in a full surrender—body, soul, and spirit—to God. Oh, let us never forget that Covenant! Supposing we should lose our character for Christ's sake? Did we not give Christ our character to begin with? You are of no use in the ministry, my dear Brother, if you are not quite willing to be called a fool, to be called a thief, or even to be called a devil! You will never be successful if you are afraid of being pelted. The true minister often finds his pulpit to be a place but little preferable to a pillory, and he is content to stand there feeling that all the abuse and blasphemy which may come upon him are only the means by which the world recognizes and proves its recognition of a God-sent man. Oh, to rest upon the Covenant which is made in Grace, and to hold fast the Covenant which Christ has compelled us to make with Him, resolved that even should He take all away, our joy, our comfort, and our ease, we will still stand to it, and still keep the Covenant!

Another reason why they turned back was that *"they refused to walk in His Law."* When we get a proud heart we very soon get beaten, for with the face of a lion, but the heart of a deer, such an one is afraid of the world. If I am willing to do what God tells me as He tells me, when He tells me, and because He tells me, I shall not turn back in the day of battle.

They also seem to have turned back *because they had bad memories.* "They forgot His works and the wonders that He had showed them." My

dear Friends, we the members of this Church have seen many of God's wonders, and have rejoiced in them, and if we were to forget these we should lack one means of comfort in our own darkness. Some of you have had very wonderful manifestations of the Lord's Kindness, and if you forget all these I should not wonder if you should prove to be a mere professor and turn your back, for God's true people are like that Mary, whom all generations call, "blessed," they treasure these things in their hearts. We ought to stir up our remembrances of God's Loving Kindness, for if we do not it will soon be a powerful reason for our turning back in the day of battle. Oh, have we not fought in days gone by, and shall we now be afraid? Have we not slain old Giant Grim? Did we not fight with dragons and with lions? Have we not gone through the Valley of the Shadow of Death? Have we not had a conflict with Apollyon himself, foot to foot, and shall Giant Despair or his wife Mrs. Diffidence make us afraid? No! In the name of God we will use the good old sword, the true Jerusalem blade that we wielded before, and we shall yet again be more than conquerors through Him who loved us! Let us, then, not forget God's works in the days of yore, lest we fail to trust Him in the days that are to come. This was why they turned back.

V. And now the last inquiry is—WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THEIR TURNING BACK?

One result of their turning back was, *that their father mourned over them.* We are told, in the passage I quoted first, that "Ephraim their father mourned for them many days." What a lamentation it brings into the Christian Church when a professor falls! There is one heart which feels it with peculiar poignancy—the heart of him who thought he was the spiritual father of the person so falling. There are no griefs connected with our work like the grief of mourning over fallen professors, especially if these happen to be ministers, men who are armed and carry bows, for when they turn back, well-equipped and well-skilled in war, it is heart breaking work indeed! I do not exaggerate, but I know I only speak the sober truth when I say that if I could submit to any form of corporeal torture that I have ever heard of, I would be willing to bear it sooner than submit to the torture I have sometimes felt over members of this Church, or what is worse, over young men educated in our College, or what is worse still, over ministers who have been for some time settled over their flocks, falling. If at any time you desire to be malicious towards the man whom you look upon as your spiritual father; if you would send an arrow through his very liver and smite him with a dagger in the core of his heart, you have nothing to do but to turn back in the day of battle and you have done it. It were better that you had never been born than that you should go back to the world. It were better that you should be taken out of this house a corpse than that you should live to disgrace the profession which you have espoused, especially those of you who stand in a prominent place. O God, keep us who witness before the multitude, keep us by Your Eternal Power, keep us as the apple of Your eye, hide us beneath the shadow of Your wings, or else we who are chief and foremost, though armed and carrying bows, shall yet turn back in the day of battle.

Another result, which you perhaps will think more important by far, was that owing to their turning back *the enemy remained.* Owing to many Christians not doing what they ought to do in the day of battle, Romanism is still in this land, and infidelity is rife. If in the days of Elizabeth and Cranmer, men had acted up to the Light of God they then had, we should not be as we now are, a semi-Popish nation. Had Luther himself been faithful to some of the Light of God to which he shut his eyes, he might have inaugurated a more perfect Reformation than that for which we are still devoutly grateful to God, and for which we always cherish his memory. There was a need of thoroughness even in that day. And at the present moment, if some of our brethren were but faithful to their own convictions, they would not be bolstering up an alliance of the State with a depraved Church; they would not dare to perform some ceremonies which are atrociously bad, and many of us, if we acted according to our inward monitor, would not do many things which we are now doing. Oh, may God give us Grace to smite the foe! What has sin to do in this world? Christ has bought the world with His blood, and oh, for Divine Grace to clear sin out of Christ's heritage! The earth is the Lord's, and the kingdoms thereof, the world and they who dwell in them; and if we were but faithful to God we should not turn back in the day of battle, and Rome and all our foes would be slain.

Then, again, if we did not turn our backs, *the country would be conquered for Christ.* I do not like the way in which some brethren say that if we were more faithful half of London would be saved. I say that I believe God's Purpose is achieved, but still we are bound to speak of our sins according to their tendencies, and the tendency of our lack of confidence in God, and our not boldly persevering, is to destroy souls. Paul talked once of destroying with meat him for whom Christ died, that being the tendency to destroy such souls if they could be destroyed. So, humanly speaking, the darkness of the world at present is owing to the unfaithfulness of the Church, and if the Church had been as true to Christ as she was in the first century, long before this there would not have been a village without the Gospel, nor a single empire in the world in which the Truth of God had not been proclaimed. It is our turning back in the day of battle that leaves Canaan unconquered for our Lord.

But, worse than this, *the Ark itself was actually taken.* My dear Friends, those of you who are armed and carry bows, men of learning, men who understand the Scriptures, I do pray you, do not turn back just now, for just now seems to be a time when the Ark of God will be taken. It can never really be so, but still we must mind that it be not the tendency of our actions. We are in great danger from what some people will not believe, but what is most certainly a fact, and that is the marvelous increase of Popery in this land. There are certain Brothers who are always harping upon this one string till we have grown sick of the theme, but, without at all endorsing their alarm, I believe there is quite enough for the most quiet and confident spirit to be alarmed at. The thing has become monstrous, and there is need to awaken the anxious care and the earnest efforts of God's Church. You need not be long without good evidence of this. Every nerve is being strained by Rome to win England to itself, and, on the other hand, while we have less new

doctrines, and less of all sorts of skepticism throughout the whole country, I am afraid that we have more of it than we used to have inside the Church itself. There are many Doctrines that are now matters of question which I never heard questioned 10 years ago. I am not altogether sorry for this, but rather glad, because there are some Doctrines which are not preached now, but which will be preached more in the future in consequence of doubts being thrown upon them. But it is a very ominous sign of the times that most of those Truths of God which we have been accustomed to accept as being the received and orthodox faith of Christendom are now being questioned, and questioned, too, by men who are not to be despised, men who from their evident earnestness, from their deep knowledge, and from their close attention to the matter, deserve a hearing in the forum of common sense, even if they do not deserve it from spiritual men.

We must all of us hold fast the Truths of God. If there is a man who has got a Truth, let him draw his bow and shoot his arrows now, and not turn back in the day of battle. Now for your arrows! Now for your arrows! The more our foes shall conspire against Christ, the more we must make war against them. Give them double for their double; reward them as they reward you. Spare no arrows against Babylon. "Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the stones." Happy shall he be who slays the little errors, who kills the minor lies, who does battle against Popery in every shape and form, and against infidelity in all its phases. If we do not come to the front now, the Ark of God, as far as we are concerned, will be taken!

And then, worst of all, *we shall hear the Philistines shouting while God's Church is weeping*! The Philistines are good hands at shouting. They shout rather loudly about nothing, but when they get a little, they bark loudly enough, then. If they see but one Christian turn back what rejoicing there is! They ring the bells and make great mirth over the fall of the very least among us, but if those of us who are armed and carry bows should turn back in the day of battle, oh, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of Philistia rejoice, lest the sons of the uncircumcised triumph!" God grant that we may never make mirth for Hell. If Satan must have merriment may he find it anywhere rather than in us. Oh, may we stand at last, and, having done all, may we still stand.

To conclude, Brothers and Sisters. If we do not stand fast, *you know what will come of it.* Supposing the Churches of which we are members do not stand fast, what will come of you and what of me? What became of Shiloh? What became of Ephraim? Instead of the Ark being any longer in the custody of Ephraim it was taken away from Shiloh, and God transferred the custody of it to Judah, and it rested upon Mount Zion under the government of King David. So, mark you, whenever a Church becomes unfaithful, and turns back in the day of battle, God takes away from it the keeping of His Ark and entrusts it to others. "I have looked upon a neighbor of yours," He said, "who is better than you," and so He takes the sword and gives it to David, and thus, perhaps, may He do with us. There are many Churches that were once flourishing but now are

deserted altogether. So it may be with us individually, and with the Churches at large unless we are faithful to God.

Now, I have said nothing to the unconverted. My drift seemed to be to speak to professing Believers. Some of you say you never went to this war, and therefore you will not turn back; you never made a profession. Ah, dear Friends, it will be a very poor excuse at the Last Great Day to say, "I never made a profession." Did you ever hear of a thief being brought up at the Mansion House before the Lord Mayor who said, when he was accused of being a thief, "Why, my Lord, I am not a very honest man; I never professed to be; I never professed that I would not pick people's pockets; I never professed that I would not steal a watch if I had the chance; I was regularly known as a thief; I never professed to be anything else, therefore you cannot blame me." If a man should make such a defense as that, I would think it very likely that the Lord Mayor would give him an extra six months, and I think it would serve him right. You smile at this, but the very same argument may be applied to you. "Well," you say, "you know I do not make any profession of religion." That is to say, you do not make any pretense of serving and loving the God who made you, who gave you life, and has kept and preserved you in it; you do not make any profession of being washed in the precious blood of Christ; you do not make a profession of being on the road to Hell. Well, may God save you from that excuse, and may He give you Grace to look it in the face and say, "Well, I do not dare even hope that I am saved; I know I am not." Then, my Friends, if you are not saved, you are lost! I would like to stop while you turn that thought over, and when you have done so I would say, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

May God's Eternal Mercy seek and save you, and, if it is His will, may He find you, and lead you to put your trust in Jesus Christ, and resting upon Him, and looking to His Cross, you shall not, as the children of Ephraim did, "turn back in the day of battle."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 78.

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SEEING IS NOT BELIEVING, BUT BELIEVING IS SEEING
NO. 698

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 1, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT CORNWALL ROAD CHAPEL, BAYSWATER.

"Whom having not seen, you love; though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."
1 Peter 1:8, 9.

A very formidable difficulty frequently besets earnest but uninstructed minds who are seeking the Savior; they do not find it difficult to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is a Savior, that He is mighty to save, but their difficulty lies in getting at Him. They believe that the medicine will cure, but their question is, how shall they drink it? They are convinced that a touch of the hem of the Savior's garment would heal their diseases, but their question is how to touch; by what means shall they be brought into contact with Christ and a Savior become *the* Savior of their souls? The constant aim of the Gospel ministry should be to remove such difficulties as these out of the way of coming souls, and we shall try this morning, as God shall help us, to lift out that stone and fill up that miry place in the king's highway that some may today be enabled to come to Jesus, understanding what that coming means, and exercising it before they leave this house. It is very common to meet with persons who say, "I wish that I had heard the Savior—actually heard Him speak. If I could have listened to that matchless eloquence of which it is written, 'Never man spoke like this Man,' I would have been convinced, melted, led to penitence, and inspired with faith. I wish I could have heard Him pronounce those words, 'Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' I would have leaped from among the crowd, and I would have cried, 'Master, I come! Your invitation draws me! Here I am, a heavy-laden sinner; give me rest.'"

You have also wished that you had been able literally to touch Him, to have put your finger into the print of the nails, and to have thrust your hand into His side. It seems to you that then you could have believed. If you might have been privileged with even the touch of the woman who did but touch the hem of His garment, much more if you might have been privileged to lean your head upon His bosom with John, you would then have believed, you think, as a matter of course, and there would have been no sort of difficulty in the way of your salvation. You have sighed, "Oh that I could have heard, have touched, and have seen Him; these would have been three pearly gates through which I might have come at Him. I could have reached Him then, if I might but have exercised my senses upon His blessed Person." Your soul has lingered over the thought of seeing Him. You have especially wondered whether it would have been possible to have seen Him upon Tabor with His garments glistening whiter than any fuller could have made them, and yet not have believed. You have thought it impossible. You have said, "If I could have been among the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane to

have seen the bloody sweat and marked the tokens of the drops of blood on the frosty ground, and if I could with tearful eyes have seen Him at the scourging and the spitting; if I could have wondered and wept with Mary at the foot of the Cross, and seen the blood drop from His hands and feet, I would then have been saved; it would have been easy to believe if there had been something to see."

At first sight indeed this is a very plausible statement, and seems as if there must be truth in it; but believe me, my dear Hearer, there is none at all, and I may say of the Savior very much what Abraham said of Lazarus, You have the Gospels and the Epistles, and you have the abiding Presence of the Holy Spirit, and if you believe not, neither would you have believed if you had been among the company who saw Jesus, touched Him, and listened to His voice. It is a mistake, a great mistake—as I think a moment's reflection would show you—to conceive that contact with Jesus through the senses would produce faith. Mark the fact that out of the mass who did see Jesus, and who did hear Him, few, very few believed. The crowd which gathered round the Crucifixion, which might seem to be the most moving scene in the story, were not bettered by what they saw. As the multitude gazed, instead of tears they yielded laughter, instead of penitence they exhibited blasphemy. There they gathered, thousands of them of all sorts, the highest and the lowest, the intelligent and the uneducated, and all alike they spat the venom of their hatred upon the Crucified One. They cried, "If He is the Son of God, let Him come down from the Cross." Seeing was not believing, but disbelieving and hating. They had beheld His miracles before His being nailed to the Cross; they had seen dead Lazarus come forth from the tomb, and marked those that had leprosy and other incurable diseases suddenly healed; they had, moreover, feasted upon the bread which He Himself had created for them, and yet they believed not. Why, then, do you conclude that you would have done so? There is nothing better in your heart than in the hearts of other men. Doubtless you would have seen all, and have been astonished and possibly affected, but the probabilities are that you would have remained what you are now, if not something worse, an unbeliever, an unsaved one. Besides, it should never be forgotten that those who did believe in Jesus Christ in His own day, had to get out of and beyond the sphere of the senses in order to believe. Let me show you what I mean. I am not certain that what they saw helped them to believe. I think it did the reverse. I grant you that to see the holiness and the self-consecration of the Lord Jesus must have had a convincing influence upon gracious hearts; but then, let me ask you, would the sight of the deep poverty of the Man of Sorrows lead you to believe in His Godhead? Would an association with Him in His rejection and dishonor lead you to believe in His celestial Glory?

Is it likely that if you had seen Him betrayed and dragged away to an ignominious doom, that the shameful scene would have been an assistance to your faith? Would not your faith have had need to triumph over all that the eyes beheld, and would it not have been necessary to use the soul's eyes rather than the poor optics of the body in order to see the Son of God in the Son of Man? How was the Messiahship, the Godhead, the Glory and the Power of Christ to be seen by the eyes? That which was seen was to a great extent hostile to faith, contradictory to it, and faith, to be exercised, had to struggle with what it saw. Does not the Prophet tell us that when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we

should desire in Him? He is a root out of a dry ground; He is a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. That which was seen of the Christ was a difficulty in the matter of faith instead of being an assistance to it. Yet further, I say when they did believe, they went beyond the mere evidence of sense. Even Thomas, in that celebrated interview with Christ, when he made the utmost use of seeing, and touching, and handling, went much farther than mere sight could conduct him. The putting of his finger into the print of the nails, and thrusting his hand into the side was convincing evidence that Christ had risen, but it does not seem to me to be evidence of what Thomas drew from it—namely, "My Lord and my God." Here faith went beyond what the finger revealed. The eye and hand showed a wounded Man, but faith could see Godhead and authority, and therefore bowed and accepted the risen Man as being from now on her Lord and her God.

Now a number of reflections of this kind I think would go very far to show you that instead of it being certain that had you seen and heard and touched the Savior you would have believed, it is, on the contrary, quite certain that you might not have believed, and that if you had done so it would not have been the result of your seeing, but it would have had to be accounted for on quite another ground, namely, that described by the Savior, when He said to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto you." You would not have had faith in Christ as the result of sight. The Holy Spirit must have worked faith in you if you had received it; that same Spirit who is able and willing to give you faith today, though now you see not the Savior.

The question returns, "If I cannot come into contact with the Savior by seeing, by hearing, by touching, tell me how I may, for I do desire that virtue should come out of Him to me. I am sick; I would be healed. I am lost; I would be saved. But by what means can I attain unto that salvation which He came upon earth to bestow?" The answer is in the text, and we shall bring it out by the following method—First, we will observe, *How we come into contact with Jesus:* secondly, *what virtue flows from that contact;* and then, thirdly, *What then—what are the inferences from this Truth of God?*

I. To begin then upon this point, HOW DO WE COME INTO CONTACT WITH JESUS? The uppermost point of contact, the most apparent and visible in the Believer's life, is *love*. Observe—"Whom having not seen you love." The Apostle Peter twice puts in the "not seen," as if he felt that though he himself had seen or had been with Jesus in the most private of His retirements, yet these Hebrew saints, strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, had not seen Jesus; and He dwells much on the fact because he knew that they were types and specimens of all succeeding Believers, of us among the rest; therefore, recording the fact that they had not seen Jesus, he describes them as loving Him whom they had not seen. Now then, dear Fiends, the first point of contact with Christ is love, and I think I can show you that we can, no, that we do love Him whom we have not seen. Jesus Christ is Incarnate God. He who fills all things and yet is not contained by all things that are made because He is greater than them all, condescended to become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He was born of the virgin and laid in the manger. In His flesh we have not seen Him. We might have gazed upon that Infant's face and seen Him in

the flesh, and yet we might not have loved Him; but now, as our believing hearts think of Him as Incarnate, our minds go back to Bethlehem and Nazareth, and our recollection pictures Him as a Man among us men; and as our soul sees Him, first as an Infant of a span long, and then suffering all our infirmities and tempted in all points like as we are, and when we reflect that He need not have suffered so, but condescended to cast aside His Glory wherein He counted it not robbery to be equal with God that He might be on a level with us, why, then, without seeing Him we love Him. Blessed Man, blessed God, condescending to be Man for me! At the very thought of Your leaving the highest throne of Glory, I love You! Foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but You had not where to lay Your head, and yet You were Lord of All! My soul needs not to see You—she loves You!

We believe, moreover, that as a Man there were beauties in His Character of such a sort that it must have been impossible, spiritually, to appreciate them without loving Him. Now, we never saw Him when He forgave His enemies, when He answered meekly those who railed at Him; we never saw Him in all His splendid life of disinterested philanthropy, nor do we regret that we did not; but when we read the story of His life, our heart pictures Him who went about doing good, and falling adoringly by faith at His feet, we say, Such a Character is lovely! Such a Person commands our hearts; and though we have not seen Him, yet the mental sight of His portrait as it is drawn by those four master artists, the Evangelists, wins our affections and holds our souls fast. It is true too that we never saw the Redeemer's griefs; we never peered into that face, more marred than that of any man; we did not see Him in the Garden in His agony, nor behold Him upon the Cross when the cry of, "Lama Sabacthani!" startled Heaven and earth, but we have mused upon all, and with the spirit's eye have seen all. We need no great strength of imagination to think of Him until *Ecce Homo*—"Behold the Man!"—rings as clear from the page of Scripture as though it came from Pilate himself. We have realized by meditation the scars upon His back where the plowers made deep furrows; we have thought upon the crown of thorns and marked the ruby drops; we have considered Him staggering beneath His Cross along the Via Dolorosa; we have marked Him as His hands and feet were pierced; we have counted the purple drops, and said, "Thus our sins were washed away." And though we have not seen Him, we do not need sight to make us love Him, for the very thought of Him, the contemplation of His intense agony for us who were His enemies, compels us to love Him. We are fastened to that Cross forever, crucified with Him, the nails which fasten us being the mighty love He bore us.

Now, Beloved, though we never saw Him dead, and did not handle that sorely marred but blessed Body, that casket for a while deprived of its inestimable jewel, His sinless soul, yet when we think of Him as lying in the cold prison of the tomb, embalmed in spices, we cannot but shed tears which are only wiped away by the glorious truth of His Resurrection. So all the story through we feel that in each one of the positions the Savior commands from us as much love as if we had been present there to see Him—no, that perhaps the sight might have produced too much astonishment, if not terror, to have permitted us to indulge with freedom the holy passion of consecrated love. Possibly, we might have been so amazed, astounded, perhaps even alarmed, when we saw the circumstances which surrounded the Master's grief, that we

might have forgotten Him in His surroundings; but now we can sit alone in our little upper room, or beneath some silent shade in the calm retreat which so well agrees with prayer and praise, and there, all alone and quiet, we can bring the Savior before our mind and feel that we love Him. Now, my dear Hearer, I think you will see that this, although it does not seem to be as real a contact as touching Him, is truly, if you think of it, more real. I may see things and yet not truly perceive them. You may travel through a country without understanding it. You see a thousand things in daily life which do not sufficiently catch your mind for you really to grasp them, but here is a case in which, without the exercise of sight, it is quite plainly within the range of our ability to get the very soul, and heart, and essence of the entire matter. And after all, it is not the seeing—that must ever be external—it is the thinking upon the thing, the understanding, the being affected with it, which is the real point of contact.

So, love to Christ becomes as real a means of union, as strong a bond to bind as ever sight and touch could be, and infinitely more so. You may touch without realizing, but you cannot love a fiction, you cannot love a myth. Love makes the Savior real to the heart. When I preach sometimes, and my love is cold, and my zeal is flagging, I talk about the Master as though He were but an historical person, someone who had lived and gone; but when my heart is warm towards Him, then I talk of Him as though He were in the pulpit with me, as though I could see Him, as though you, too, could see Him, as though I was speaking of our own familiar Friend who was here in the midst of us. Beloved, every spiritual mind knows, and I need not remind him of it, that love realizes Christ, and thus the contact which love makes between Christ and the soul is more real than any which the hands or the eyes could form.

But the text tells us of another point of contact—"Though now you do not see Him, yet believing." We are again reminded here that we do not see, but we are assured of the possibility of believing in Him without sight. I must take you again to the Savior's life. Beloved, we did not see Him die—that terrible misery, that fearful ignominy we never did behold. We did not sit still during the three hours of black darkness which covered all the land; we did not hear Him say, "I thirst," nor mark them as they thrust the sponge full of vinegar up to His blessed lips; but we have believed on Him. Ah, have I not, by faith, made real to myself the Savior on the Cross? Have I not, by faith, seen Him and cast myself there and said, "Ah, Lord, I trust my whole eternity with You? My soul, my spirit, my body, everything that is mine trusts in You." I know, and you know who have believed Him, that you could not, if you saw Him, trust Him more than you do now. His death is the unsupported pillar of your confidence and the sole foundation of your hope. In Christ you have believed, and you know that your sins are forgiven, that His Righteousness is imputed to you, and that you stand accepted in the Beloved. This is not to you a matter of hope; it is a matter of firm conviction. If you perish you will perish at the foot of the Cross, but you are convinced you will never perish there. You have not seen, but you have believed. As to His Resurrection, also, you did not see Him when He rose early in the morning from the tomb and the watchmen in terror fled far away, but you have believed in Him as risen. Have you not thus believed? We are persuaded that Jesus lives, and we derive consolation from the fact. We believe concerning Him that death has no more

dominion over Him. Immortal, He cannot die again. The lamb of the Jewish Passover was slain every year, but He, our Lamb, lives no more to die, for He has accomplished the work of His death, and now lives to carry on the work of His great after-life. We trust Him. Why not? What more reason for trust could I have if I had seen Him rise than I have now, when I believe the fact? I cast myself upon the Truth of God that my Lord is risen. I believe that because He lives I shall also live, and it is possible to believe this as firmly as though we saw it.

Beloved, at this moment Christ is in Heaven pleading for us. We cannot see the ephod and the breastplate, we cannot hear the tones of majestic Love in which our great High Priest pleads before His Father's Throne, but we believe that He intercedes successfully for us. We choose Him to be our Advocate in every case of sore distress, in every case of grievous sin; we believe that because He is at the Father's right hand He is able to save unto the uttermost them who come unto God by Him, and we leave our suit with Him in perfect confidence. Believing in Jesus brings us into as real a contact with Him as seeing Him could possibly produce, for you cannot believe in what you think to be fiction. You cannot trust your soul, and your best and most weighty interests with a mere myth. Your faith must be convinced of Christ, and must have had communion with Him, or else it would not be faith at all. So you see, dear Friends, both love and faith are two clear points of contact. These are the two bonds which unite us to the Savior. While some go about teaching that there is a connection with Jesus brought about by infant sprinkling and by confirmation, by what certain gentlemen are pleased to call "the blessed Sacraments," we solemnly testify in the name of Him that lives and was dead, that the true way of coming to Jesus lies in faith and love, and without these you may baptize and confirm and give sacraments *ad nauseam*—but you have not approached the Lord. The true Christ is not there at the font, nor there with the lawn sleeve, nor there at the altar, nor with your acolytes and other performers, but He is to be found where the heart longs after Him, where the soul trusts Him, where the spirit loves Him. Even the two Scriptural ordinances are but in the outer court, and are nothing of themselves, the true keepers of the door of Jesus' house are faith and love.

I read the other day of a certain renovated Puseyite synagogue having a path up to it called the *Via Crucis.* I must confess to having had but slender acquaintance with the play-things and nursery games of that sect. I have no idea of what is meant by their *via crucis,* but this I know, the true *via crucis,* or way of the cross, is to believe and to love. We were told not long ago by an Anglican priest that the history of the spiritual life was portrayed in the edifice in which he officiated. He began with regeneration in the font, and led his hearers by easy stages till he perfected them in the chancel or up in the steeple, I cannot remember which. All that may sound very pretty; I think it shamelessly immature; to me it looks like a return to the absurd superstitions of the Dark Ages. I have no more reverence for their genuflections, performances, and theatrics than for the incantations of an old hag who pretends to be a witch. There is nothing manly, much less divine, in the new-fangled Romanism. God's religion is *spiritual,* theirs is carnal and sensuous. "The day comes, and now is, when they who worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him." For spiritual men there is not needed incense, banners, wide-sleeved

garments, or crosses, nor any external thing—only the mental action of the inward nature exercised upon the Lord Jesus in love and trust. How simple this is!

There is a story told of a certain farmer in France who, in the days of bad farming, produced wonderful crops from his ground, so that all his neighbors believed him to be addicted to witchcraft, and when they summoned him for the practice of it, he brought up before the court his two sturdy lads, his oxen, and his plows, and said, "These are the implements of my witchcraft; I simply work hard." Now I fear there are many who, if asked what is the way of their coming into union with Christ, have all sorts of mysterious, laborious inventions, but we bring before you nothing but just these—trust and love; these are the instruments of our religion. Like the Apostles, we need no wagon to carry with us our altar, our vestments and other paraphernalia—we preach the Gospel, and exhort men to faith and love, and have no need of drapery, architecture, rubrics, and ceremonies. Trust and love—these two things bring the spirit into contact with the Lord Jesus Christ; and we are prepared against all the world to hold these two things, and believe that were those other things to fail, and turn out to be a delusion and a lie, these will succeed to the salvation of the soul. "Whom having not seen, you love; though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice."

Still, the point is that carnal people will imagine that if there could be something to touch or smell they should get on, but mere believing and loving are too hard for them. Yet such thought is not reasonable, and I can show you why. Occasionally one meets with an illiterate working man who will say to those whose occupation is mental, "I work hard for my living," insinuating that the mind-worker does not work at all. Yet I ask any man who is engaged in a mental pursuit whether he does not know that mental work is quite as real work—and some of us think more so—as working with your hands. The thing is mental, but is none the less real. An illiterate man cannot see that it is work, but he who is capable of mental labor soon feels the reality of it. Just transfer that thought. Coming into contact with Christ by touch looks to most people to be most real because their animal nature is uppermost; coming into contact with Jesus by the spirit seems to them to be unreal only because they know nothing of spiritual things. Thoughtless persons think that mental pain is nothing. Mere animal men will often say, "I can understand the headache, I can understand the pain of having a leg cut off." But the pain of injured affection, or of receiving ingratitude from a trusted friend, this is by the rough mind thought to be no pain at all. "Oh," he says, "I could put up with that." But I ask you who have minds, Is there any pain more real than mental pain? Is it not the sharpest when the iron enters into the soul? Just so the mental operation—for it is a mental operation—of coming into contact with Christ by loving Him and trusting Him is the most real thing in all the world, and no one will think it unreal who has once exercised it.

So then, poor seeking Sinner, it comes to this—you have not to go anywhere, or say anything, or do anything, but, sitting where you are, if you can trust the Son of God with your soul, if you can love the altogether Lovely One, the thing is done; you have touched Him after a spiritual sort, and you have all the virtue that comes out of Jesus by a touch. There is life in a look, we often say, but this is the kind of look—the look is loving and trusting; they go together, they are born at the

same time. We love those we trust, and we trust those we love, and if you love and trust Jesus you are saved.

II. I must have your patient attention to the second part of the subject. WHAT VIRTUE IS THIS WHICH FLOWS FROM HIM? *When a soul has touched Him by love and faith, what virtue comes?* The Apostle answers, "Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you do not see Him, *yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."*

The first result of trusting and loving Christ is joy, and joy of a most singular, remarkable kind. It is far above all common joy. It is spoken of as "inexpressible"—"joy inexpressible." Now earth-born joys can be told to the full; one man can tell his joy to his fellow, and his fellow understands, for he is earth-born, too. But spirit-born joys cannot be told because we have not yet received a spiritual language. I suppose that is the language reserved for Heaven where spiritual minds shall talk to spiritual minds without being confined to the poor poverty-stricken words of Earth so necessary to us while yet in the body. The joy is inexpressible because you cannot possibly describe its true essence. If a man should try to tell all spiritual joys to his fellow he would feel silenced like Paul, and feel that he had heard things which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Holy Rutherford in his letters has gone far to picture to us what the Christian's joy is, and so has Solomon in the Book of the Song; but carnal men cannot comprehend Rutherford, and as to the Canticles, there is no Book in the Bible which staggers a worldling so much as the Song. He says, "Oh, it is a mere love tale." Of course it is to you, O carnal Reader, but the reason is in yourself; it was not possible for Solomon to put into language the experience of Divine Love, except by the use of metaphors. He had to describe love as we have to describe God, speaking after the manner of men, and so he must speak after a natural sort, and therefore the golden Canticle looks as if it were an earthly nuptial ode, whereas it is so high that the uninstructed cannot attain to it.

The joy of Believers is unspeakable because there is no telling it. Earthly joy is often exaggerated; you can describe it in words too flatteringly expressive, but you cannot act thus with a Christian's joy. His joy is one that speaks better through his eyes than his lips; it makes his countenance glow with delight. I have seen men's faces lit up with Heaven's sunlight when the joy of the Lord has been shed abroad in their hearts. The very people who a day ago looked dull and heavy look as if they could dance for mirth because they have found the Savior, and their soul is at peace through Him. The Apostle adds that it is *full of glory*. Many sensual joys are full of shame—a man with a conscience dares not tell them to his fellows. The joys of sense are oftentimes unfit to be whispered in the dark, and the joys of the world are mostly too selfish to be boasted of. The joy of making money is not full of glory, nor is the joy of killing one's fellows in battle. There is no joy like that of the Christian, for he dares to speak of it everywhere, in every company. We will tell the devils in Hell that we are not ashamed to glory in the Cross, and we will tell unbelievers upon earth the same. We will dare to say it to the teeth of the worst of men that we have a joy they know nothing about. And in Heaven we shall not be ashamed to tell to principalities and powers of those draughts of love which we have been made to drink from the well of Christ Jesus—in whom, though now we see Him not—yet believing, we rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.

Why is this joy of the Christian so inexpressible and full of glory? I think it is because it is so altogether Divine. It is God's own joy; it is Christ's own joy. Can you guess what the joy of God is? No, perhaps not—but every Christian has within himself a portion of the joy of God, for God joys in Christ and glorifies Himself in Jesus, and so do we also joy and glory in Him whom having not seen, we love.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, it is for you to prove to the world by your daily walk and conversation that it is so. For my own part, I will bear my own personal witness that I never knew the meaning of that little word "joy" till I knew Christ. I knew the childish glee of boyhood. I understand, alas, something of the frothy joy upon the cup of sin, but let me say—I am speaking to those of my own age especially—if I had to die like a dog and there was no hereafter, if I had nothing for my faith but the happiness which it yields me in this life, I would be a Christian sooner than I would be any conceivable form of existence. I would sooner be a believer in Jesus in the depth of poverty, racked with bodily suffering, and oppressed with the greatest possible persecution, than I would be without faith in Christ. I would rather be a believer in Christ Jesus than have the noblest possible position with the greatest possible earthly enjoyments, for there is nothing at all like the joy inexpressible and full of glory. Sometimes, when it is flood-tide with us, our joy is so great that we think we shall die—our joy is too strong for our frail body; and even when it is ebb-tide with us, yet we have a peace of God which passes all understanding, a peace which the world cannot give, and which, thank God, it cannot, cannot take away. Now, Brethren, many of you know this, and you know also that this joy inexpressible and full of glory is not dependent upon circumstances. You have had great success—this joy inexpressible and full of glory was not increased by that success, you rather trembled lest you should sin through being in high places; and you have had great trouble, but this joy inexpressible has not been diminished by it; you have felt that God was with you, and that all things would work together for your good. You have wept over your children when they have died—a mother's grief has filled the eyes with tears, but still the joy inexpressible has cheered the heart. You have lost property, and been wrongfully despoiled of reputation, but the joy inexpressible has been unaffected by all this. You have done with your crown jewels what many of the princes on the Continent have done with theirs—you have sent them where they are safe, you have put your treasure in the better land on the other side of Jordan, in the islands of the blessed, in the land of the hereafter where Jesus is.

The Apostle mentions another blessing received by loving and trusting Christ. He says, "receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Every man who trusts and loves Christ is saved. The common idea is that perhaps we shall get saved when we die. I know nothing of such a salvation. True salvation saves now. The Apostle, when he writes to Believers, always speaks to them as persons who are saved, not who shall be, but are. When salvation is once done, it is done forever. If you are saved, you are saved—you will be never lost. Those who trust Jesus and love Him are saved. But it will be said, "How is that a matter of fact?" Well, it is a matter of fact two ways. First, they are conscious that they are saved from *the guilt of sin.* Of this they are conscious in themselves. The guilt of sin, when it is on a man's conscience, is unmistakably there, for it weighs him down to such an extent that he

cannot doubt it. Well do some of us recollect when we could not even sleep by night much less have comfort by day, because sin was on our conscience. We wished sometimes, as John Bunyan says, that we had been made frogs or snakes rather than men, for sin on the conscience makes manhood odious, and life itself undesirable; but when we believed and loved Jesus, we knew that our guilt was taken off the conscience. You say, "How did you know?" We knew just as we knew when it was on. If a man has a burden on his back, even though he has no eyes, he can feel it, and as soon as it is gone, though he has no eyes, he can feel that it is removed. So was it with us, when we believed in Jesus, our sin was all gone; our feelings were altogether different from what they were—

"Now, oh joy, my sin is pardoned,
Now I can and do believe."

We began to sing for very joy of heart. The removal of guilt is no fiction. It will be said it is a mere brain-sick enthusiasm. Have you ever tried it? If you have not, you are not fit to judge about it; but if you have experienced it you will say of it, "Oh if it is enthusiasm, blessed enthusiasm! Let me never be rid of it. If this is a dream it is so Divine that it should be true." When we trusted Jesus, though we used no forms and ceremonies, we received the salvation of our souls.

Here is a point still more tangible—they who trust and love Christ are saved from the *power of sin;* and this is a practical point to be seen even by the eye; for instance, a man with a horrid temper; almost insane from his anger, was led to trust Jesus and to love Him. There may still be traces of that old temper in the man, but I will defy you to find a gentler or more patient soul than he is now. That same man whose fist was so soon doubled, and whose eyes so rapidly flashed fire will now hear a vast amount of teasing, and look on and feel, "If I were what I once was I would join in this row, but now I pity and forgive." I can picture you another. There was a man who spent every night in the beer house or in worse places. His house was a Hell—his wife and family afraid to see him—the man a drunkard, a fornicator, and everything that was foul; but he came to believe and trust Christ. Now it is a matter of fact that he is a new man through believing. Ask his wife and she says, "Never was there such a change. Our home is happy, our children happy, we have happy mornings and evenings, for my husband prays; that is not all, Sir; my husband is such a heavenly-minded man that you could no more believe him to be the same man than you could believe that a lamb was once a lion." Ah, the man has received the salvation of his soul! How did he receive it? Did we baptize a new heart into him? Did we confirm him into morality? Did we perfume him, intone him, and confess him into holiness? No! No! He trusts Jesus and loves Him, and all is done. He received the salvation of his soul by these simple means. Now every person who has trusted and loved Jesus becomes a living witness to this. The vital power of religion is perceived by each man in himself. If you have a faith which has left you what you used to be, throw your faith to the dogs. If you have a faith in Christ which does not make you desire holiness it is a delusion that will drag you to the bottomless pit of Hell, for only the faith that works by love and purifies the soul is genuine. True trust in Jesus, and love to Him always does this; it makes the person receive the salvation of his soul from the enslavement of his baser powers, delivers him from the dominion of Satan and of sin, and he

becomes at once a sinner saved by Divine Grace, and all this by the two points of contact—trusting and believing.

III. I must not stop longer, but finish by a few words upon the third point. WHAT FOLLOWS THEN FROM THE WHOLE OF THIS?

It follows, in the first place, that a state of joy and salvation is the fitting, proper, and expected condition of every Believer in Christ. If you are a Believer in Jesus, and I see you sorrowing, what must I say? I do not mean sorrowing as the effect of mere Providential arrangements; of course we sorrow as other men, and Jesus wept, but I mean this—if I see you constantly without joy inexpressible, if I mark that all your joy and hope are gone, what must I say? I begin to doubt whether you can be a Believer; and if I may not raise that question, and if it is certain that you have faith and love to Christ, I must say to you, my dear Friend, that you have suspended their action, and therefore you have suspended the enjoyment of their result. Go back again to where you were; go and stand at the foot of the Cross and trust Christ and love Him, and your joy will return. I am sure it will. I have tried it—I have tried it hundreds of times; I am unbelieving by constitution, frequently desponding, very often depressed, but I have never been in the depths of despondency without almost immediately coming up from them as soon as ever I have thought of Him, and my soul has rested upon Him and leaned on Him.

There is another inference to be drawn from my subject, and that is to the seeking soul. If you want comfort this morning, go to Christ. But I have here the old answer again—I have heard it scores of times—"Sir, you say come to Christ: how can I come? If Jesus Christ were at New York I would know how to get at Him. I would understand what He meant by 'come.' If there were some appointed place in London where every soul might go, I could understand it." Yes, that is to say, you could understand the mere carnal act of coming, but this coming is a spiritual thing, and it is just as real as if it were carnal. You come to Christ by thinking of Him, trusting Him, and loving Him though you have not seen Him. I say, then, come to Christ, Trust Him, and love Him, and whatever your infirmities and spiritual difficulties, you shall get over them all; for if Christ undertakes to get you through them He will do it. He is mighty to save. But you say, "I cannot believe, 'Faith is the gift of God.'" I know it is, but perhaps you have it already. Dead men cannot believe, but the quickened can. The Son of God bleeds for sinners, the Son of God, on the tree, offers an Atonement for human sin—can you trust Him? You answer, "I do trust Him." Then you not only have the power to do it, but you are doing it. If you are convinced that Jesus is able to save you, and are willing to trust Him, you certainly can trust Him, for inability lies in the will, and as your will is now right, all your inability is gone. The power which the Holy Spirit gives is spiritual—a power which removes our natural opposition to Jesus, and when this is removed the power is given.

If you do now trust Christ, fall before Him and say, "Savior, God, deliver me. By Your life and by Your death, by Your griefs and Passion, by Your Resurrection and Your pleading at Your Father's Throne, deliver me. I trust You to deliver me, I cast myself upon You!" If you do this you are saved—you are saved now—you have no sin in God's Book—every sin is blotted out, and therefore being justified by faith, you shall have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. But you reply, "My sins are very great." Yes, but however great your sin it matters not; the same

hand which can receipt a little bill can receipt a great one—it takes no more when the money is paid. Christ has paid all the debts of those who trust Him, and He can readily forgive you. "Come now, and let us reason together, said 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." "Yes, but," says another, "it is my propensity to sin that I am afraid of. How shall I ever break the neck of my corruptions?" *You* will never do it, but *He* will. Do you not remember that when they pierced His side there flowed blood—that was for pardon; and there flowed water—what was that for? That was for cleansing. He will be sin's double cure.

Is it some sin or some lust that you would conquer, or an angry disposition? Take it to Him; those vipers die at the sight of Christ. There is no form of sinfulness to which you are captive which Christ cannot remove. You *must* give them up, remember, there is no going to Heaven and keeping your sins—you must give them all up; but then you are not to give them up in your own strength. You shall receive a strength which shall make you more than a man—you shall be a man with God living in you, for the Holy Spirit dwells in us, we are temples of God. When God dwells in the temple He can purge out a great deal which we cannot purge out, and He can make us clean though otherwise we would have remained impure. "Still," says another, "I have such a need of tenderness this morning. I have not thought about these things, I have lived a careless giddy life; must I not give some week or month or two to the consideration of these things, and then come to Christ? Must I not go home and humble myself before God, and then believe and love?" My dear Hearer, do what you will after trusting, but trusting is the immediate remedy this morning. *Now* is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.

May you and I come to trust and love, and we shall soon prove to ourselves, even if we cannot prove it to others, that there is a power and vitality in faith and love not to be found in all the performances of the priests who are laboring to bring our nation back to the midnight of Romanism.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 PETER 1.

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DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 8, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh."
Romans 8:3.

ONE of the sweetest and most attractive titles of our Lord Jesus Christ, is, "the Friend of sinners." He was in His manners so gentle towards offenders, so graciously did He seek out the lost, and so tenderly did He invite the erring to pardon and reconciliation, that it was slanderously said of Him that He was the Friend of sin as well as of sinners. This was the old heathen slander of the days of Celsus. Philosophy and Phariseeism sneeringly asserted that Jesus treated iniquity so lightly, and made it so easy a matter to escape from its consequences, that He was rather the helper and abettor of sin than its destroyer; and they blasphemously declared that His Apostles had preached the doctrine of "let us do evil that good may come." My Brothers and Sisters, you know that this charge was utterly and entirely false, and those who uttered the libel knew it to be so, too, if they were at all conversant with our Lord's history. In His example evil meets with no encouragement, and in His teaching it finds no excuse. If they possessed the slightest acquaintance with the objectives of His life, they must have known that though the Friend of sinners, He was emphatically beyond all other public teachers the Enemy of sin. His hatred towards sin was not a mere passion, it was a principle; it did not flash forth now and then, it was a constant flame. He hated sin, if I may say so, implacably, never making a moment's truce with it; He pursued it by day in His ministry, and by night in His prayers; He lived to smite it and he died to destroy it; and now in His risen Glory it is upon sin as well as upon Satan that He sets His heel. He was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil, and He has erected a battering engine which will not leave of Satan's strongholds so much as one stone upon another.

In the life of our Lord His tenderness for sinners was but the natural form in which His hatred for sin displayed itself; just as a physician, from the very fact that he is the antagonist of disease, displays a deep interest in those afflicted by it. Our Lord's keeping company with sinners by no means proved that He was the friend of sin any more than the physician's attendance at the hospital would at all lead to the suspicion that he was the friend of disease. The skillful physician is the friend of the diseased, but to the disease itself what enemy shall be found more

determined and inveterate? Because the whole have no need of a physician, Jesus seeks them not; but since the sick need Him, He seeks them, not out of love to their sin, but out of love to them, that they may be delivered from the cruel bondage under which their sin has held them.

You will have noticed, too that even when the Savior is most tender towards a certain class of sinners, it is that He may display His wrath against sin itself; He will not denounce one sin and exonerate another, but all sin shall see in Him its deadly foe. It is true He said to the woman taken in adultery, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." By this He by no means excused her adultery, but He declined to assume the functions of an earthly judge, and more especially He refused to pronounce sentence upon one case alone when so many were before Him who were not accused, but were known to Him to be equally guilty. His leniency to one could do no mischief when His Justice to all was so conspicuous. Those who brought the woman desired Him simply to show His hatred of her, and to manifest abhorrence of that one offense which had happened to be found out; but that flash of His eyes when He said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," was a far more terrible deliverance against sin than if He had said, "Yes, take her away and bind her hand and foot, and let her die; but as for you, you hypocrites, you who are practicing, perhaps, the same sin in private, inasmuch as you have not been discovered by your fellow men, I allow you to escape with impunity." If He judged one He must judge all, and therefore He dismissed them all to the appointed time for judgment; manifesting, it seems to me, quite as much His hatred of sin as His tenderness towards the sinner. So everywhere connected with the gentleness of the Savior, in which He does not "break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax," there is a most determinate wrath, a lion-like fierceness against sin, especially in its hypocritical forms, for He who bids the open and acknowledged sinner come to Him cries in the same breath, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," and calls them whitewashed sepulchers filled with dead men's bones.

There is not then the slightest foundation for the accusation that Jesus is in the least degree the Friend of sin, though He is the Friend of sinners. On the contrary, we can easily prove the assertion which is made in the text that Jesus Christ came into the world to condemn sin, and has condemned it, that sin never was condemned before as it was in the Sacrifice of His Person, and that the Law of Moses itself could not, through the weakness of the flesh, condemn sin as Jesus Christ has done; for He has not only passed sentence upon it but has executed it, carrying the sentence into effect. God had condemned sin before, but never so efficiently as in the Person of His Son. God's very Nature condemns sin. The existence of the thrice Holy Jehovah is a constant protest against all unholiness. God condemned sin in that day when He drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden, when He allowed the trail of the serpent to ruin Paradise, and condemned our first parents, all naked and ashamed, to till the ground from which they were taken, and in the sweat

of their face to eat bread. God condemned sin, constantly condemned it in the death which became common to the entire race. Every funeral is God's repetition of His anathema against sin. When our friends are carried to the silent sepulcher, the Lord of All does in fact say to us, "See what a bitter thing sin is; it takes the light from the eyes and the music from the ears; it silences the voice of song, and palsies the hands of skill; it quenches the fire of love upon the heart's altar, and removes the light of understanding from the brain's judgment seat, and gives over the creature, once so lovely and beloved, to become a putrid mass, a horror and a loathing, so that affection itself cries out, 'Bury my dead out of my sight.'" Thus every gravestone and every green hillock in the cemetery may be regarded as the still small voice of God solemnly condemning sin.

The Lord of Old judged and condemned sin in that great and terrible calamity which swept the whole race away with a mighty deluge; when "sea monsters whelped, and stabled in the palaces of kings," when over the mountains' loftiest brow the raging billows prevailed, and not even the shriek of a "strong swimmer in his agony" could be heard, for Death rode triumphant on the crested billow over a sea without a shore. Then it was that God declared sin to be so dreadful that it saddened Him that He had made men upon the face of the earth, and He drew up the floodgates of His wrath until He had swept the earth clean of the rebellious race, except the elect eight who floated in the Ark. In later years the Lord opened all the batteries of Heaven against sin in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Terrible was that hail of fire, and sleet of brimstone which descended upon the cities of the plain because the reeking foulness of their sin had come up into the nostrils of the Most High, and He could endure it no longer. But all these judgments which I have mentioned were comparatively inoperative upon the conscience of man. Man sinned though he was expelled from the Garden; he did not fall down on his knees and hate the sin which had withered Eden. Man grew up to mourn, but his mourning did not heal him of sinning; the medicine was very bitter, but it did not cure. Notwithstanding that the tradition of Eden and the expulsion must have been fresh in the memories of mankind, and they must have known that sin, and sin only, was the cause of every mother's pang, and the cause of every man's toil, when in the sweat of his brow he ate his bread—yet man followed sin as though it were his chief good.

Even the constant occurrence of death has not taught man the evil of the root which produced so dire a fruit. Man sins although he stands upon the brink of the grave. It is not enough that the halter is about the traitor's neck, he commits fresh treasons while standing beneath the gallows; he knows that his doom is recorded, and that his life is only a reprieve, and yet he insults the judge. Man knows that it is only a matter of time when his body should return to the dust from where it came, and yet dying man is sinful man, and though he knows that he shall soon appear before his Maker's bar, how slight the worry of this is upon any man! In fact, where are a more thoughtless race of men than those who have most acquaintance with the grave, and where shall you find men

who laugh at death more than those who are constantly engaged at the tomb? Moreover the great judgments of the deluge, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah made but a slight impression upon mankind, for man began to build his Babel tower in defiance of God almost as soon as the flood was eased and men began to multiply. And as for Sodom and Gomorrah, there were doubtless men who looked on at that fearful blaze, and saw the smoke blacken the heavens, who then returned to their lusts, and were still as before given up to their idols. All the judgments were weak, because man's flesh is so stubbornly set on sin.

It is never to be forgotten that the Lord judged sin and condemned it upon Sinai. The Law of God of the Ten Commands, with the penal sentence attached, was intended to be God's great conviction, trial, and judgment of sin. Truly, when we consider that Law so high, so broad, so all-encompassing, so reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart, and when we recollect how it was given with sound of trumpet, and blaze of lightning, with a boundary set around the mountain, with fearful curses upon the man who should violate its commands, and with wondrous blessings to those who should keep its precepts, it must appear to be a singularly glorious and commanding judgment of sin. "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went a fiery Law for them." "His lightning enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the Presence of the Lord, at the Presence of the Lord of the whole earth." Sinai itself was altogether on a smoke, so that the man, the mediator Moses, said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." That Law, given by angels in the hand of a mediator was steadfast and terrible, and was a most wondrous judging and condemning of sin; yet you know what little effect it had upon those who had first received it. Before the forty days were over, before Moses could get down from the mountain, they were dancing around the golden calf, and shouting, "These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of Egypt." From that day till now what has God's Law been to the carnal mind? A form printed upon tablets in their churches, but not written on the tablets of their hearts; a rule read in their hearing, but forgotten in their lives; admired in theory, but neglected in practice.

The scene at Sinai was a solemn judgment of sin, just as were the other judgments which I have mentioned; but in effect it was inoperative, it was weak, not in itself, but through the flesh; weak, because man is so strong in sin; weak, because for unrenewed man to know God's will is for him to know how to fly in the teeth of it. Human nature has learned how to rebel rather than how to obey by studying the Law; the Commandments which were ordained for life have been made our death. The Law has been made by our rebellious wills a negative rather than a positive rule, and man has learned by it how to live so as to insult his great Benefactor and Friend. Thus it is clear that though the Lord oftentimes condemned sin, yet sin still reigned in man's heart; therefore He sent His own Son into the world to do what His judgments and His

Law had not done, namely, to condemn sin in the flesh, that once and for all we might know in our inmost souls that sin is a hateful thing, and knowing, might feel it and avoid it.

This brings me to the text itself. The text may be understood in two ways—these two senses shall constitute the two heads. Sin *was condemned* by our Lord's suffering for sin; notice the margin—"By a sacrifice for sin" He condemned sin in the flesh. The first head then is, *sin was condemned by Christ's sacrifice of Himself;* and secondly, as some translators give to the word "condemned" the force of *destroyed*, we shall read it thus, *sin was executed in the sufferings of the Savior.* These two points, if God the Holy Spirit shall lead us into them, may afford us a good morning's meditation; and then the practical conclusions from them will, I hope, be not restricted to this morning, but accompany us all our days.

I. Our first point is this, that albeit all the former condemnations of sin which God gave to the world were weak through the flesh, yet THERE HAS NOW BEEN GIVEN A MOST EFFECTIVE AND POTENT CONDEMNATION OF SIN IN THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Of course, the potency must be judged by its effect upon those who received that Sacrifice; and in such persons sin is most effectually condemned.

1. The Savior condemned sin by His sufferings, *by allowing it to work itself out to its legitimate result.* Sin is exceedingly sinful, but we could never have known how sinful sin was if it had not slain Christ. A certain preacher who delighted in a very flowery style, once ventured in a very splendid passage of his oration to depict the loveliness of virtue. "O virtue, you fair angel," and so on, "if you should come down to earth in all your radiance," etc., etc., "all men would love you." This wonderful flight of wordiness receives its fall in the history of Calvary. We could never have known how detestable sin was if this had not been put to the test; Virtue did come down among men, not in its severer aspect as a stoical moralist, but it descended in its gentlest form in the Person of the most loving and tender Man who ever lived, even Jesus Christ; but sin so hates and loathes that which is good, that instead of receiving this Incarnate Virtue with honor, sin was never satisfied till after hunting the Man through life, it at last nailed Him to the gallows of a malefactor, and put Him to a death too cruel even for the most loathsome and detestable of beings. It is with sin according to the parable of our Lord. Sin had entered the vineyard of the Lord and robbed Him of the fruit thereof. He sent His servants to His vineyard, and they cried unto it, "Thus and thus says the Lord," but Sin, being angry, took the servants, one by one, knowing them to be the servants of God, and it smote one, and threw another into prison, and slew another till the servants of God came only to be persecuted and to be slain. At last He said, "I will send My Son; they will surely reverence My Son." It was surely impossible that if the Son of God should come armed with a commission from the Most High, Sin would venture to smite Him; but behold the hardihood of Sin; it said,

"This is the heir, let us kill Him that the inheritance may be ours." And it slew Him and cast Him out of the vineyard.

Sin was then seen to be the cruel, horrible, detestable, traitorous thing which God had declared it to be; and now that man knows it to be such, he cannot deny it, for the murdered body of the Savior shows the deadly mischief that lurks in Sin. It is as though there were a certain poisoned river, and a parent had often said to his children, "Drink it not, my children; it is sweet at first, but soon it will bring on you pains most fearful, and death will shortly follow. Do not drink it." But these children were very willful and would not believe it; and, albeit that sometimes a dog or an ox would drink of it and be sorely pained and die, they did not believe in all its injurious effects to them. But by-and-by One made like unto themselves drank of it, and when they saw Him die in anguish most terrible, then they understood how deadly must be the effects of this poisoned stream. When the Savior Himself was made sin for us and then died in griefs unutterable, then we saw what sin could do, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin was displayed. To use another illustration—you have a tame leopard in your house, and you are often warned that it is a dangerous creature to trifle with. But its coat is so sleek and beautiful, and its frolicking is so gentle, that you let it play with the children as though it were a well-domesticated cat. You cannot have it in your heart to put it away; you tolerate it, no, you indulge it. Alas, one black and terrible day it tastes of blood, and tears in pieces your favorite child, then you know its nature and need no further warning; it has condemned itself by displaying the full ferocity of its nature.

So with sin; we thought it such a fair thing we could not be persuaded that anything so pleasant, so fair spoken, could really be so deadly an enemy as God said it was. But when sin leaped upon our altogether lovely Jesus, and like a ravening wolf delighted itself in His slaughter, then it condemned itself most effectually. Every Christian feels this—what he could not feel through contemplating the expulsion from Eden—what he might not feel through thinking of the curse of the Law, he does feel and must feel when he sees sin thus prostrating the Lord of Life and Glory, and making Him suffer even to the death. Christian, you know now what sin would do to you, how it would scourge and crucify you, make you cry, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" and cast you into a bloody sweat, and utterly destroy you; you see now that sin has such a weight in it that only Eternal God can bear it; and you will, from now on, hate and dread it—you will no longer favor it. God has condemned it by allowing it to show itself in its true colors; you hear the condemnation, and you say amen to it, do you not? What the Law could not do, God has done.

2. But the text wears a fuller meaning when we recollect that Christ did not only condemn sin by allowing it to carry itself out to the fullest, but *He condemned it by actually bearing its penalty as our Substitute.* This is the great Doctrine of Holy Scripture, and it becomes us to speak very plainly about it. The punishment which was due to man for sin was suffered by our Lord; if not the exact punishment, yet that which was

equivalent to it was suffered by the Savior on the Cross, and this constituted the most weighty and effectual condemnation of sin. Observe carefully, dear Friends, that the condemnation of sin in the Sacrifice of Christ derives much of its weight from *the dignity of His Person.* Sin was laid this time not on an angel, not on some chosen cherub or seraph, but sin was laid upon One who is none other than God Over All, blessed forever. The Mighty God Himself wrapped His Glory in a veil of our inferior clay, and then sin was laid on Him. Now if sin is such a terrible thing, if it deserve the condemnation that is pronounced upon it, we shall see what it will do with Him. Will sin bring Him down? Will sin make Him smart? Will sin make Him cry? He is God's Only- Begotten Son; sin must be a bitter thing indeed if it is necessary for God to smite His own Son! Will not the Great Ruler of the universe make an exception in this case? Sin may be very gross, but can He not, when it is laid upon One so heavenly, so pure, so Divine, may not He deal gently with it? He may use His rod, but surely He will not unsheathe His sword.

Listen! "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion, says the Lord." There is no sparing here. Do you see the Savior ground between the upper and nether millstone of Divine Vengeance? Hear His cries and mark His falling tears, perceive His heart surrounded with Divine Wrath and filled with sorrow, till like a boiling caldron, it flows over in groans and cries. Look at that spectacle of woe till you dare not look any longer, for the grief is too amazing for the eyes to see or for the soul to think upon! Now, Sin, you are condemned indeed! Hunted out from place to place, at last you leap upon the Palace of God, you touch that Human Tabernacle wherein the Second Person of the Divine Trinity rested; but the Tabernacle must come down, Death must invade even the body of the Christ of God because sin was laid upon Him. This is all the more amazing and more remarkable a condemnation of sin because it was not His own sin—in Him was no sin—and yet the sins of His people, when laid upon the Savior, made Him exceedingly sorrowful even unto death.

Sin was condemned, again, by *the excellence of the motive which led the Savior to take sin upon Himself.* He took the sins of His enemies upon Himself, sins of those who could not reward Him for His pains, but who, on the contrary, had up to now despised Him and esteemed Him not. When He was found with sin laid upon Him, He was not taken as a thief nor seized as a malefactor by our God; Justice knew that Christ was in the sinner's place for no motive but one of disinterested Love; He had nothing to gain, but everything to lose. Those for whom He came, as we have already said, but we need to remind you of it again, had no claims upon Him, they had no love for Him; and even after He had given Himself to die for them, they lived in hardness of heart, rejecting Him till His own superior Grace overcame them. Now one would think that a Man having sin upon Him from such a motive, so heavenly, so Divine, might have been spared. But Jesus was not spared—of the cup He drank every drop, of the lash He felt every blow. The penalty which Christ endured was not a mitigated penalty for sin, but the whole weight of Jehovah's Wrath fell

on Him. He was treated as a thing accursed, for He was made a curse for us; made sin for us that we might be made the Righteousness of God in Him. In what a manner was sin thus condemned! I shall not, however, treat this as a matter of doctrine; I shall come to you, Christian, and ask you if it is not so in your inmost heart. Is not sin condemned in your heart when you see the Lord of Glory die for your iniquities? Do you not hate the sin which brought Him down to such a depth? And when you remember that He died, that though He was guiltless He died simply out of love for you, do you not vow a full revenge against your sin, and feel that the thing which once might be pleasurable is now detestable? Do you not feel that that which you could toy with and think nothing of is now loathsome to the very last degree?

Once, again, did the Savior not condemn sin most emphatically in *the terror of the pains which He endured?* The severity of God to sin was marked in the Savior's bitter griefs. No, I will not tell you over again that old story, that precious story of the Passion in the Garden, of the betrayal by His friend, of the accusations of treason and of blasphemy, of the scourging, the crown of thorns, the spit, the mocking, the bearing of the Cross, the piercing of His hands and feet, the stripping, the scorn, the thirst, the fever, the death—I will only just remind you of His desertion by His God, of the soul-griefs that He endured. Oh that I had power to depict them, and that your minds could view them aright! We are never duly impressed, I am afraid, with the griefs of the Son of God. We weep over some silly story; or when we hear of the little griefs of our friends we mourn with them, but the griefs of our best Friend do not affect us, and the sorrows of our best Beloved do not move us as they ought. Yet at times, at favored intervals, when you and I are permitted to sit and view the flowing of His precious blood, when we gaze into His wounds, when we hear his death-cries, and mark His pangs and sorrows—then we have felt that sin was condemned. We never hate sin as much as when we get a realizing thought of the griefs of Immanuel. Human philosophy cannot make you hate sin; the study of the Law of God cannot make you hate it; but if you have ever, with tearful glance, beheld the Son of God expiring and groaning out His life for you in consequence of your sins—then God has done in you, despite the weakness of your flesh, what the Law could not do, and what all other things beside could never accomplish.

I must press this matter home with you, Christians, that you may give your own verdict whether it is not so. Have you not felt that you have not half a word to say for sin now? That you could not defend it, no, that you could not bear it? It is now as if a man should come to you and say, "I have slain a man, hide me from justice." You might possibly consider whether you should conceal him; but if you discovered that he had assassinated your child and that his hands were blood-red with its innocent blood, you would say, "Hide you? How can I hide you? It is my own child whom you have slain." When sin comes to me I know its mischievous effect, and I dare not for that reason, tolerate it; but when I hear that it slew my dear Redeemer, slew Him who loved me eternally

and without change; loved me without a motive for loving me, but only because He would love me—when I hear that sin slew Him, I cry, "Away with you! Sin, away with you! Away with you! It is not fit that you should live. Away with you! Down to the depths of Hell descend, and even there there is no darkness as dark as you are! No terror so terrible as you are! You Hell of hells, you blackness of darkness! You accursed thing! You have slain my Lord." This is what the text means when it tells us that the Sacrifice of Jesus condemns sin.

II. JESUS EXECUTES AND DESTROYS SIN.

When we have a great offender to deal with, it is something to get him condemned, but our customs in this country do not always necessitate that a person condemned to die should die, for there are some cases now fresh in your memory where the sentence of death has been pronounced, and probably very justly too, and yet mercy (God forbid that I should say a word against it!) has come in, and the sentence has not been carried out. Now our Lord Jesus not only came into the world to pronounce the sentence of death upon sin, but He crucified it, He fought with it and overthrew it then and there. He was not merely Judge, but Executioner; "for sin He condemned sin in the flesh." At the present moment sin is crucified in those souls where Christ reigns. We will show you in what way Christ has executed sin.

In the first place our Lord has destroyed it as to its *penal power.* There is no power in sin to condemn the Believer now. "What?" says one, "Does not sin condemn every man at whose door it lies?" Certainly it does—sin condemns every man with whom it is found; but in the case of the Believer sin is not imputed, not laid at his door, for David said, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." The sin of the Believer was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ, "for the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." And from that day forward the penalty of sin has been discharged and removed by the Redeemer's having endured it Himself. The black cloud of my sin has no rain in it; it has emptied out its rain upon Christ. No, the black cloud itself has ceased to be. The Red Sea of my sin cannot drown me; it is dried up by Christ; I have a safe passage through it. My sin is, in itself, most deadly and destructive as I see it to have been in the Person of my Lord Jesus, but it shall neither destroy nor condemn me, for it has destroyed and condemned Christ. And He has destroyed and condemned it. Good old Christmas Evans describes death as a dragon wearing a sting called sin, and being so determined to destroy the Savior that it darted its sting right through His body into the Cross. "And then," he says, "he could never draw it out again." That old dragon Death is a dragon still, but it has lost its sting, for it left its sting in the Cross of the dead Redeemer. Sin is gone and gone forever. "He has finished transgression, and made an end of sin." The jaw teeth of sin are broken; it may howl at me and worry me, but it cannot rend me or destroy me. As for original sin, Christ has put that away; as for actual sin, however great or however numerous actual sins may be, Christ has destroyed the penal

power of sin in the case of every Believer. "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Once you get into Christ, O Believer, you may see your sin laid on the scapegoat's head of old, and carried right away into the wilderness of oblivion where it shall never have an accusation to raise against you any more forever.

Sin, in the next place, was executed by Christ as to *its depressing power upon the conscience.* When an ungodly man is awakened to see sin, it weighs on his heart like a nightmare. "I cannot," he says, "I cannot be saved! My sin is so evil; no longer may I hope, it is in vain to pray, in vain to trust, in vain to do anything; my sin fills me with despair; it makes me drunk with wormwood, and breaks my teeth with gravel." But sin has no such depressing power upon the Christian as to drive him to despair. He sees sin, but he beholds an Atonement made; he perceives how black a thing sin is, but he sees the Fountain filled with blood; he weeps over his sin, but he does not despair about it; he understands that sin by itself would put him into a helpless plight, but he understands that the Eternal Love of God, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, has made his case not only hopeful, but one in which he is safe and sure of Everlasting Life because the penalty for sin has been discharged by the Redeemer on his behalf. Sin is dead to the Christian in those two senses. I look sin in the face and I say to it, "You foul, you loathsome, you detestable thing; you cannot drag me down to Hell; I know you cannot, and you cannot even make me fear; I am bold, I can sing, I can rejoice, sinner as I am! You cannot stop me of my glory, for I am in Christ, absolved in Christ and secure." In these two senses sin is put away forever by our Savior's death.

Moreover, sin is destroyed in the Christian as to its *power over his heart.* No soul that has come to trust in Jesus Christ loves sin. You do sin, my Brothers and Sisters, but if you could have your own way, you would not. If your new nature could follow out its bent and desire, what would you be? Would you not desire to be perfect even as God is perfect? To cease from every sin, and run in every Christian duty? I can say honestly that if I might now have my choice, it should not be to possess wealth, or even health, nor fame, nor any of those things which dazzle human eyes, but to be perfectly holy. Even if I must be in consequence very poor, and very despised, or even die; to be perfectly holy were the climax of one's wishes. This shows that sin is destroyed in our heart. As Master Bunyan tells us, Diabolus could not enter the citadel any more after the Prince Immanuel had driven him out of the town of Mansoul; he did enter the city through Ear-Gate and Eye-Gate, and his troops swarmed in every street, but he could never recapture the castle. The heart is kept for God; the heart of the Christian is intact and chaste for the soul's true Husband, the Lord Jesus. Sin is slain in the heart by Jesus. We cannot love sin since Christ has died.

The Lord Jesus Christ, by His death has also crucified sin *in its active energy over our lives.* Alas, not over the lives of some professors, but they are not the true Israel. There are some professors of religion who, when

the Lord comes, will certainly meet with a very fearful end—I mean such of you as profess to be the Lord's people, and yet can secretly indulge in the sins of the flesh, can trade dishonestly, privately serve the devil, neglect prayer, and act as sinners do, and yet all the while pretend to be among the living family of the living God. It were better for you that you had never been born; it were better for you that a millstone were tied round your neck, and that you were cast into the depth of the sea, than to unite yourself with a Christian Church and make a profession of being in Christ while you are the slave of your detestable lusts. Oh, may God make right many of you who may be in such a plight! May He pull your masks from your faces, wash the paint from your cheeks, and make you to be in your own sight what you are in His sight. If I must be lost I would rather be lost knowing my condition than be lost a self-deceived man, and go from the cup of the Lord to drink the cup of wrath forever, and be chased away from the communion of saints down into the pandemonium of Hell. However, in the genuine Christian sin has lost its power in his life—he cannot do as others do. If he is ever tempted to it, like Joseph he says, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" The Believer is in the body and therefore his flesh is weak, but his spirit lives, and he therefore cannot let the body have dominion over him. Those lusts in which some indulge he abhors, and he will not even mention them, as becomes saints. Those words which glide so glibly from other men's lips he hates, and will not utter them—they are foreign words to him. The swine rolls in the mire with delight, but the sheep abhors it. When before his conversion the man was a raven, how he gloated over his carrion! But now he is a dove he frequents the rivers of pure water, and loves clean feeding while his clipping wings often bear him above the clouds. Yes, and above the stars, too, into the serene atmosphere where the dove-like Spirit dwells. He is a new creature in Christ Jesus, and sin is destroyed in its energetic influence over his life.

The day is coming—blessed be God, the day is coming—when *sin in its very being will be utterly destroyed in every Believer.* Sin within us lies like a condemned criminal with his neck under the guillotine. Oh that the axe would drop! Oh that the knife would take away the life of sin forever! Oh blessed hour! Oh sweet discharge to be rid of every temptation and propensity to sin! Sentence of death is recorded, and the culprit is crucified, his hands are nailed fast, he cannot act as he would; his feet are nailed fast, he cannot run as he would, and he will die before long. Oh blessed day when he shall be wholly dead, and the soul shall be free from sin, holy even as God is holy, to dwell with Him forever!

Now, Beloved, you clearly see that the Law could not in any of these senses destroy sin, and that the Judgments of God do not make men give up the love of sin; they are hardened rather than softened by the terrors of God; instead of sin losing its power over the conscience by hearing of the Law of God, it is strangely true that the more he understands the hatred of his Maker against sin, man just sets himself more determinately against his Maker. But the wounds of Jesus can do what

nothing else can do. When I am pardoned, I hate sin; when I see the Love of God in Christ Jesus, sin becomes a condemned and destroyed thing.

I must now close with the lessons to be learned from this. It gave me great consolation, when studying this text, to notice that Christ had condemned sin *in the flesh*, for the flesh is sin's stronghold; it is sin's box out of which it can scarcely be driven. Our Lord has condemned it in the flesh*;* then, blessed be God, our very flesh shall one day be rid of this condemned, executed thing, and my very bones shall rejoice, see Jesus in the day of the Resurrection, and sing because sin has no more dominion over it. Christian, this is the lesson I long for you to learn. First. *Hate sin in every shape.* Christ condemns it, do not you approve it; Christ executes it, do not you harbor it; it slew the Savior, slay *it*. Hate sin! *Have good heart as to its destruction.* Do not think that sin is mightier than you are when Christ is with you. Up at your sins and slay them. Do not tamely yield to your besetting sin. Let this resolution this day be strong, that the victory shall be yours in every part of the battle, and that no sin shall remain in dominion over you. This day record your thanksgiving to Him who fought the battle for you and won it. He has condemned sin on your behalf, and slain it too. Ascribe unto Him glory and honor, and this day let your song go up to the place where He dwells.

And to you, Sinner, this lesson—*See how sin is punished.* If it is punished in Christ, it will surely be avenged in you; if Jehovah spared not His own Son, He will never spare His enemy. Take heed, Sinner, of your sin. It will be your everlasting ruin if you are not rid of it. *See how you can be delivered.* Even you, flesh as you are, and the slave of flesh, Christ can save from your sin. Trust your soul with Him! Come as you are, all sinful and defiled, and cast yourself at the foot of His Cross by a simple act of trust. He will cast out your sin, for He has condemned it in the flesh. Oh may He condemn it in your flesh, condemn it in you now, and save you from it by destroying *it* and saving *you!* God grant it may be so with us, and His be the Glory. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 8.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat! I would present my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments." Job 23:3, 4.

IN Job's uttermost extremity he cried after the Lord. The longing desire of an afflicted child of God is once more to see his Father's face. His first prayer is not, "Oh that I might be healed of the disease which now festers in every part of my body!" Nor even, "Oh that I might see my children restored from the jaws of the grave, and my property once more brought from the hand of the spoiler!" No, the first and uppermost cry is, "Oh that I knew where I might find HIM—who is my God! That I might come even to His seat!" God's children run home when the storm comes on. It is the Heaven-born instinct of a gracious soul to seek shelter from all ills beneath the wings of Jehovah. "He who has made his refuge God," might serve as the title of a true Believer. A hypocrite, when he feels that he has been afflicted by God, resents the infliction and, like a slave, would run from the master who has scourged him; but not so the true heir of Heaven, he kisses the hand which smote him, and seeks shelter from the rod in the bosom of that very God who frowned upon him. You will observe that the desire to commune with God is intensified by the failure of all other sources of consolation. When Job first saw his friends at a distance, he may have entertained a hope that their kindly counsel and compassionate tenderness would blunt the edge of his grief; but they had not long spoken before he cried out in bitterness, "Miserable comforters are you all!" They put salt into his wounds; they heaped fuel upon the flame of his sorrow; they added the gall of their upbraiding to the wormwood of his griefs. In the sunshine of his smile they once had longed to sun themselves, and now they dare to cast shadows upon his reputation—most ungenerous and undeserved. Alas for a man when his wine cup mocks him with vinegar, and his pillow pricks him with thorns! The Patriarch turned away from his sorry friends and looked up to the celestial Throne, just as a traveler turns from his empty skin bottle and betakes himself with all speed to the well. He bids farewell to earth-born hopes, and cries, "Oh that I knew where I might find my God!"

My Brothers and Sisters, nothing teaches us so much the preciousness of the Creator as when we learn the emptiness of all besides. When you have been pierced through and through with the sentence, "Cursed is he who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm," then will you suck unutterable sweetness from the Divine Assurance, "Blessed is he who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Turning away with bitter scorn from earth's hives, where you found no honey, but many sharp stings, you will rejoice in Him whose faithful Word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb.

It is further observable that though a good man hastens to God in his trouble, and runs with all the more speed because of the unkindness of his fellow men, yet sometimes the gracious soul is left without the comfortable Presence of God. This is the worst of all griefs; the text is one of Job's deep groans, far deeper than any which came from him on account of the loss of his children and his property: "Oh that I knew where I might find HIM!" The worst of all losses is to lose the smile of my God. He now had a foretaste of the bitterness of his Redeemer's cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" God's Presence is always with His people in one sense, as far as secretly sustaining them is concerned, but His manifest Presence they do not always enjoy. Like the spouse in the Song, they seek their Beloved by night upon their bed, they seek Him but they find Him not; and though they wake and roam through the city, they may not discover Him, and the question may be sadly asked again and again, "Saw you Him whom my soul loves?" You may be beloved of God, and yet have no consciousness of that love in your soul. You may be as dear to His heart as Jesus Christ Himself, and yet for a small moment He may forsake you—and in a little wrath He may hide Himself from you.

But, dear Friends, at such times the desire of the believing soul gathers yet greater intensity from the fact of God's Light being withheld. Instead of saying with proud lips, "Well, if He leaves me I must do without Him; if I cannot have His comfortable Presence I must fight on as best may be," the soul says, "No, He is my very life; I must have my God. I perish, I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, and nothing but the arm of God can deliver me." The gracious soul addresses itself with a double zeal to find out God, and sends up its groans, its entreaties, its sobs and sighs to Heaven more frequently and fervently, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Distance or labor are as nothing; if the soul only knew where to go, she would soon overleap the distance. She makes no stipulation about mountains or rivers, but vows that if she knew where, she would go, even to His seat. My soul in her hunger would break through stone walls, or scale the battlements of Heaven to reach her God, and though there were seven Hells between me and Him, yet would I face the flame if I might reach Him—nothing daunted if I had but the prospect of at last standing in His Presence and feeling the delight of His love. That seems to me to be the state of mind in which Job pronounced the words before us.

But we cannot stop upon this point, for the object of this morning's discourse beckons us onward. It appears that Job's end, in desiring the Presence of God, was that he might pray to Him. He had prayed, but he wanted to pray as in God's Presence. He desired to plead as before one whom he knew would hear and help him. He longed to state his own case before the seat of the impartial Judge, before the very face of the all-wise God; he would appeal from the lower courts, where his friends judged unrighteous judgment, to the Court of King's Bench—the High Court of Heaven—there, said he, "I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments."

In this latter verse Job teaches us how he meant to plead and intercede with God. He does, as it were, reveal the secrets of his closet, and unveils the art of prayer. We are here admitted into the guild of suppliants; we are shown the art and mystery of pleading; we have here taught to us the

blessed handicraft and science of prayer, and if we can be bound apprentices to Job this morning, for the next hour, and can have a lesson from Job's Master, we may acquire no little skill in interceding with God.

There are two things here set forth as necessary in prayer—*ordering of our cause, and filling our mouth with arguments.* We shall speak of those two things, and then if we have rightly learned the lesson, a blessed result will follow.

I. First, IT IS NECESSARY THAT OUR SUIT BE ORDERED BEFORE GOD. There is a vulgar notion that prayer is a very easy thing, a kind of common business that may be done anywhere, without care or effort. Some think that you have only to take a book down and get through a certain number of very excellent words, and you have prayed and may put the book up again. Others suppose that to use a book is superstitious, and that you ought rather to repeat extemporaneous sentences, sentences which come to your mind with a rush, like a herd of swine or a pack of hounds, and that when you have uttered them with some little attention to what you have said, you have prayed. Now neither of these modes of prayer were adopted by ancient saints. They appear to have thought a great deal more seriously of prayer than many do nowadays. It seems to have been a mighty business with them, a long-practiced exercise in which some of them attained great eminence, and were thereby singularly blest. They reaped great harvests in the field of prayer, and found the Mercy Seat to be a mine of untold treasures.

The ancient saints were accustomed, with Job, to order their cause before God; that is to say, as a petitioner coming into Court does not come there without thought to state his case on the spur of the moment, but enters into the audience chamber with his suit well prepared, having moreover learned how he ought to behave himself in the presence of the great one to whom he is appealing. It is well to approach the seat of the King of kings as much as possible with premeditation and preparation, knowing what we are about, where we are standing, and what it is which we desire to obtain. In times of peril and distress we may fly to God just as we are, as the dove enters the cleft of the rock, even though her plumes are ruffled; but in ordinary times we should not come with an unprepared spirit, even as a child comes not to his father in the morning till he has washed his face. See yonder priest; he has a sacrifice to offer, but he does not rush into the court of the priests and hack at the bullock with the first pole-axe upon which he can lay his hands, but when he rises he washes his feet at the bronze laver, he puts on his garments, and adorns himself with his priestly vestments—then he comes to the altar with his victim properly divided according to the Law of God, and is careful to do according to the command, even to such a simple matter as the placing of the fat, and the liver, and the kidneys, and he takes the blood in a bowl and pours it in an appropriate place at the foot of the altar, not throwing it just as may occur to him, and kindles the fire not with common flame, but with the sacred fire from off the altar.

Now this ritual is all replaced, but the truth which it taught remains the same; our spiritual sacrifices should be offered with holy carefulness. God forbid that our prayer should be a mere leaping out of one's bed and kneeling down, and saying anything that comes to hand; on the contrary, may we wait upon the Lord with holy fear and sacred awe. See how David

prayed when God had blessed him—he went in before the Lord. Understand that; he did not stand outside at a distance, but he went in before the Lord and he sat down—for sitting is not a bad posture for prayer—let who will speak against it—and sitting down quietly and calmly before the Lord, he then began to pray, but not until first he had thought over the Divine Goodness, and so attained to the spirit of prayer. Then by the assistance of the Holy Spirit did he open his mouth. Oh that we more often sought the Lord in this style! Abraham may serve us as a pattern. He rose up early—here was his willingness; he went three days journey—here was his zeal; he left his servants at the foot of the hill—here was his privacy; he carried the wood and the fire with him—here was his preparation; and lastly he built the altar and laid the wood in order, and then took the knife—here was the devout carefulness of his worship.

David puts it, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up," which I have frequently explained to you to mean that he marshaled his thoughts like men of war, or that he aimed his prayers like arrows. He did not take the arrow and put it on the bowstring and shoot, and shoot, and shoot anywhere; but after he had taken out the chosen shaft, and fitted it to the string, he took deliberate aim. He looked—looked well—at the white of the target; he kept his eyes fixed on it, directing his prayer, and then drew his bow with all his strength and let the arrow fly; and then, when the shaft had left his hand, what does he say? "I will look up." He looked up to see where the arrow went, to see what effect it had; for he expected an answer to his prayers, and was not as many who scarcely think of their prayers after they have uttered them. David knew that he had an engagement before him which required all his mental powers; he marshaled up his faculties and went about the work in a workmanlike manner, as one who believed in it and meant to succeed. We should plow carefully and pray carefully. The better the work the more attention it deserves. To be anxious in the shop and thoughtless in the closet is little less than blasphemy, for it is an insinuation that anything will do for God, but the world must have our best.

If any ask what order should be observed in prayer, I am not about to give you a scheme such as many have drawn out, in which adoration, confession, petition, intercession, and ascription are arranged in succession. I am not persuaded that any such order is of Divine Authority. It is to no mere mechanical order I have been referring, for our prayers will be equally acceptable, and possibly equally proper, in any form; for there are specimens of prayers, in all shapes, in the Old and New Testaments. The true spiritual order of prayer seems to me to consist in something more than mere arrangement. It is most fitting for us first to feel that we are doing something that is real; that we are about to address ourselves to God, whom we cannot see, but who is really present; whom we can neither touch nor hear, nor by our senses can apprehend, but who, nevertheless, is as truly with us as though we were speaking to a friend of flesh and blood like ourselves. Feeling the reality of God's Presence, our mind will be led by Divine Grace into an humble state; we shall feel like Abraham, when he said, "I have taken upon myself to speak unto God, I that am but dust and ashes." Consequently we shall not deliver ourselves of our prayer as boys repeating their

lessons, as a mere matter of rote, much less shall we speak as if we were rabbis instructing our pupils, or as I have heard some do, with the coarseness of a highwayman stopping a person on the road and demanding his purse of him; but we shall be humble, yet bold petitioners, humbly importuning mercy through the Savior's blood. We shall not have the reserve of a slave but the loving reverence of a child, yet not an impudent, impertinent child, but a teachable, obedient child, honoring his Father, and therefore asking earnestly, but with deferential submission to his Father's will.

When I feel that I am in the Presence of God, and take my rightful position in that Presence, the next thing I shall want to recognize will be that I have no right to what I am seeking, and cannot expect to obtain it except as a gift of Divine Grace, and I must remember that God limits the channel through which He will give me mercy—He will give it to me through His dear Son, and *only* through His Son, Jesus Christ. Let me put myself, then, under the patronage of the Great Redeemer; let me feel that now it is no longer I who speak but Christ who speaks with me, and that while I plead, I plead His wounds, His life, His death, His blood—Himself. This is truly getting into order.

The next thing is to consider what I am to ask for. It is most proper in prayer, to aim at great distinctness of supplication. There is much reason to complain of some public prayers, that those who offer them do not really ask God for anything. I must acknowledge I fear to having so prayed myself, and certainly to having heard many prayers of the kind in which I did not feel that anything was sought for from God—a great deal of very excellent doctrinal and experimental matter uttered, but little real petitioning, and that little in a nebulous kind of state, chaotic and unformed. But it seems to me that prayer should be distinct, the asking for something definitely and distinctly because the mind has realized its distinct need of such a thing, and therefore must plead for it. It is well not to beat round the bush in prayer, but to come directly to the point. I like that prayer of Abraham's, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" There is the name and the person prayed for, and the blessing desired, all put in a few words—"Ishmael might live before You!" Many persons would have used a roundabout expression of this kind, "Oh that our beloved offspring might be regarded with the favor which You bear to those who," etc. Say *"Ishmael,"* if you mean "Ishmael." Put it in plain words before the Lord. Some people cannot even pray for the minister without using such circular descriptives that you might think it were the parish usher, or somebody whom it did not do to mention too particularly. Why not be distinct, and say what we mean as well as mean what we say? Ordering our cause would bring us to greater distinctness of mind. It is not necessary, my dear Brothers and Sisters, in the closet to ask for every supposable good thing; it is not necessary to rehearse the catalog of every need that you may have, have had, can have, or shall have. Ask for what you now need, and, as a rule, keep to present needs; ask for your daily bread—what you need now—ask for that. Ask for it plainly, as before God, who does not regard your fine expressions, and to whom your eloquence and oratory will be less than nothing and vanity. You are before the Lord; let your words be few, but let your heart be fervent.

You have not quite completed the ordering when you have asked for what you need through Jesus Christ. There should be a looking round the blessing which you desire, to see whether it is assuredly a fitting thing to ask; for some prayers would never be offered if men did but think. A little reflection would show to us that some things which we desire were better left alone. We may, moreover, have a motive at the bottom of our desire which is not Christ-like—a selfish motive which forgets God's Glory, and caters only for our own case and comfort. Now although we may ask for things which are for our profit, yet we must never let our profit interfere in any way with the Glory of God. There must be mingled with acceptable prayer the holy salt of submission to the Divine Will. I like Luther's saying, "Lord, I will have my will of You at this time." "What?" you ask, "You like such an expression as that?" I do, because of the next clause, which was, "I will have my will, for I know *that my will is Your will."* That is well spoken, Luther! But without the last words it would have been wicked presumption. When we are sure that what we ask for is for God's Glory, then, if we have power in prayer, we may say, "I will not let You go unless you bless me." We may come to close dealings with God, and like Jacob with the Angel, we may even wrestle, and seek to give the Angel the fall sooner than be sent away without the benediction. But we must be quite clear, before we come to such terms as those, that what we are seeking is *really for the Master's honor*.

Put these three things together, the deep spirituality which recognizes prayer as being real conversation with the invisible God—much distinctness which is the reality of prayer, asking for what we know we need—and with much fervency, believing the thing to be necessary, and therefore resolving to obtain it if it can be had by prayer, and above all these, complete submission, leaving it still with the Master's will—commingle all these, and you have a clear idea of what it is to order your cause before the Lord.

Still prayer itself is an art which only the Holy Spirit can teach us. He is the Giver of all prayer. Pray for prayer—pray till you can pray; pray to be helped to pray, and give not up praying because you cannot pray, for it is when you think you cannot pray that you are most praying; and sometimes when you have no sort of comfort in your supplications, it is then that your heart, all broken and cast down, is really wrestling and truly prevailing with the Most High.

II. The second part of prayer is FILLING THE MOUTH WITH ARGUMENTS—not filling the mouth with many words nor good phrases, nor pretty expressions, but filling the mouth with arguments. The ancient saints were known to argue in prayer. When we come to the gate of Mercy forcible arguments are the knocks of the rapper by which the gate is opened.

Why are arguments to be used at all, is the first inquiry; the reply being, Certainly not because God is slow to give, nor because we can change the Divine Purpose, nor because God needs to be informed of any circumstance with regard to ourselves or of anything in connection with the mercy asked; the arguments to be used are for our own benefit, not for His. He requires for us to plead with Him, and to bring forth our strong reasons, as Isaiah said, because this will show that we feel the value of the mercy. When a man searches for arguments for a thing it is

because he attaches importance to that which he is seeking. Again, our use of arguments teaches us the ground upon which we obtain the blessing. If a man should come with the argument of his own merit, he would never succeed; the successful argument is always founded upon Divine Grace, and hence the soul so pleading is made to understand intensely that it is by Grace, and by Grace alone that a sinner obtains anything of the Lord. Besides, the use of arguments is intended to stir up our fervency. The man who uses one argument with God will get more force in using the next, and will use the next with still greater power, and the next with still more force. The best prayers I have ever heard in our Prayer Meetings have been those which have been most full of arguments. Sometimes my soul has been fairly melted down when I have listened to Brothers and Sisters who have come before God feeling the mercy to be really needed, and that they must have it, for they first pleaded with God to give it for this reason, and then for a second, and then for a third, and then for a fourth and a fifth, until they have awakened the fervency of the entire assembly!

My Beloved, there is no need for prayer at all as far as God is concerned, but what a need there is for it on our own account! If we were not compelled to pray, I question whether we could even live as Christians. If God's mercies came to us unasked, they would not be half as useful as they now are, when they have to be sought for; for now we get a double blessing, a blessing in the obtaining, and a blessing in the seeking. The very act of prayer is a blessing. To pray is as it were, to bathe one's self in a cool gentle stream, and so to escape from the heat of earth's summer sun. To pray is to mount on eagle's wings above the clouds and get into the clear Heaven where God dwells. To pray is to enter the treasure house of God and to enrich one's self out of an inexhaustible storehouse. To pray is to grasp Heaven in one's arms, to embrace the Deity within one's soul, and to feel one's body made a Temple of the Holy Spirit. Apart from the answer, prayer is, in itself, a benediction. To pray, my Brothers and Sisters, is to cast off your burdens, it is to tear away your rags, it is to shake off your diseases, it is to be filled with spiritual vigor, it is to reach the highest point of Christian health. God give us to be much in the holy art of arguing with God in prayer!

The most interesting part of our subject remains; it is a very rapid summary and catalog of a few of the arguments which have been used with great success with God. I cannot give you a full list; that would require a treatise such as Master John Owen might produce. It is well in prayer to plead with Jehovah *His Attributes.* Abraham did so when he laid hold upon God's Justice. Sodom was to be pleaded for, and Abraham begins, "Perhaps there are 50 righteous within the city: will You also destroy and not spare the place for the 50 righteous that are therein? That be far from You to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from You: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Here the wrestling begins. It was a powerful argument by which the Patriarch grasped the Lord's left hand, and stopped it just when the thunderbolt was about to fall. But there came a reply to it. It was intimated to him that this would not spare the city, and you notice how the good man, when sorely pressed, retreated by inches; and at last, when he could no

longer lay hold upon Justice, grasped God's right hand of Mercy, and that gave him a wondrous hold when he asked that if there were but *10* righteous there the city might be spared. So you and I may take hold at any time upon the Justice, the Mercy, the Faithfulness, the Wisdom, the Long-suffering, the Tenderness of God, and we shall find every Attribute of the Most High to be, as it were, a great battering ram with which we may open the gates of Heaven.

Another mighty piece of ordnance in the battle of prayer is *God's Promise.* When Jacob was on the other side of the Brook Jabbok, and his brother Esau was coming with armed men, he pleaded with God not to allow Esau to destroy the mother and the children, and as a master reason he pleaded, "And You said, Surely I will do you good." Oh the force of that plea—he was holding God to His word: "You said." The Attribute is a splendid horn of the altar to lay hold upon, but the *Promise*, which has in it the Attribute and something more, is yet a mightier holdfast. "You said." Remember how David put it. After Nathan had spoken the Promise, David said at the close of his prayer, "Do as You have said." That is a legitimate argument with every honest man. Has God said, and shall *He* not do it? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Shall not *He* be true? Shall *He* not keep His word? Shall not every word that comes out of His mouth stand fast and be fulfilled? Solomon, at the opening of the Temple, used this same mighty plea. He pleads with God to remember the word which He had spoken to his father David, and to bless that place. When a man gives a promissory note his honor is engaged. He signs his hand and he must discharge it when the due time comes, or else he loses credit. It shall never be said that God dishonors His notes. The credit of the Most High never was impeached, and never shall be. He is punctual to the moment; He never is before His time, but He never is behind it. You shall search this Book through, and you shall compare it with the experience of God's people, and the two tally from the first to the last; and many a hoary Patriarch has said with Joshua in his old age, "Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised: all has come to pass."

My Brothers and Sisters, if you have a Divine Promise, you need not plead it with an "if" in it; you may plead with certainty. If for the mercy which you are now asking, you have God's solemnly pledged word, there will scarcely be any room for the caution about submission to His Will. You know His Will—that Will is in the Promise—plead it. Do not give Him rest until He fulfills it. He meant to fulfill it, or else He would not have given it. God does not give His word merely to quiet our noise, and to keep us hopeful for a while, with the intention of putting us off at last; but when He speaks, He speaks because He means to act.

A third argument to be used is that employed by Moses—*the great name of God.* How mightily did he argue with God on one occasion upon this ground! "What will You do for Your great name? The Egyptians will say, Because the Lord could not bring them into the land, therefore He slew them in the wilderness." There are some occasions when the name of God is very closely tied up with the history of His people. Sometimes in reliance upon a Divine Promise, a Believer will be led to take a certain course of action. Now, if the Lord should not be as good as His Promise, not only is the Believer deceived, but the wicked world looking on would say, "Aha! Aha! Where is your God?" Take the case of our respected

Brother, Mr. Muller, of Bristol. These many years he has declared that God hears prayer, and firm in that conviction he has gone on to build house after house for the maintenance of orphans. Now, I can very well conceive that, if he were driven to a point of need of means for the maintenance of those thousand or 2,000 children, he might very well use the plea, "What will You do for Your great name?" And you, in some severe trouble, when you have fairly received the promise, may say, "Lord, You have said, 'In six troubles I will be with you, and in seven I will not forsake you.' I have told my friends and neighbors that I put my trust in You, and if You do not deliver me now, where is Your name? Arise, O God, and do this thing, lest Your honor be cast into the dust." Coupled with this, we may employ the further argument of *the hard things said by the revilers.* It was well done of Hezekiah, when he took Rabshakeh's letter and spread it before the Lord. Will that help him? It is full of blasphemy, will that help him? "Where are the gods of Arphad and Sepharvaim? Where are the gods of the cities which I have overthrown? Let not Hezekiah deceive you, saying that Jehovah will deliver you." Does that have any effect? Oh yes! It was a blessed thing that Rabshakeh wrote that letter, for it provoked the Lord to help His people.

Sometimes the child of God can rejoice when he sees his enemies get thoroughly out of temper and take to reviling. "Now," he says, "they have reviled the Lord Himself; not me alone have they assailed, but the Most High Himself." Now it is no longer the poor insignificant Hezekiah with his little band of soldiers, but it is Jehovah, the King of angels, who has come to fight against Rabshakeh. Now what will you do, O boastful soldier of proud Sennacherib? Shall not you be utterly destroyed, since Jehovah Himself has come into the fray? All the progress that is made by Popery, all the wrong things said by speculative atheists and so on, should be by Christians used as an argument with God why He should help the Gospel. "Lord, look how they reproach the Gospel of Jesus! Pluck Your right hand out of Your bosom! O God, they defy You! Antichrist thrusts itself into the place where Your Son once was honored, and from the very pulpits where the Gospel was once preached, Popery is now declared. Arise, O God, wake up Your zeal, let Your sacred passions burn! Your ancient foe again prevails! Behold the harlot of Babylon once more upon her scarlet-colored beast rides forth in triumph! Come, Jehovah! Come, Jehovah, and once again show what Your bare arm can do!" This is a legitimate mode of pleading with God, for His great name's sake.

So also may we plead *the sorrows of His people.* This is frequently done. Jeremiah is the great master of this art. He says, "Her Nazirites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: their visage was blacker than coal." "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" He talks of all their griefs and needs in the siege. He calls upon the Lord to look upon His suffering Zion; and before long his plaintive cries are heard. Nothing is so eloquent with the father as his child's cry, but one thing is mightier still, and that is a moan. When the child is so sick that it is past crying and lies moaning with that kind of moan which indicates extreme suffering, and intense weakness, who can resist that moan? Ah, and when God's Israel shall be brought very low so that they

can scarcely cry but only their moans are heard, then comes the Lord's time of deliverance, and He is sure to show that He loves His people. Dear Friends, whenever you, also, are brought into the same condition, you may plead your moans, and when you see a Church brought very low, you may use her griefs as an argument why God should return and save the remnant of His people.

Brothers and Sisters, it is good to plead *the past* with God. Ah, you experienced people of God, you know how to do this. Here is David's specimen of it: "You *have* been my help. Leave me not, neither forsake me." He pleads God's Mercy to him from his youth up. He speaks of being cast upon his God from his very birth, and then he pleads, "Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not." Moses also, speaking with God, says, "You *did* bring this people up out of Egypt." As if he would say, "Do not leave Your work unfinished; You have begun to build, complete it. You have fought the first battle, Lord, end the campaign! Go on till You get a complete victory." How often have we cried in our trouble, "Lord, You did deliver me in such-and-such a sharp trial, when it seemed as if no help were near; You have never forsaken me yet. I have set up my Ebenezer in Your name. If You had intended to leave me, why have You showed me such things? Have You brought Your servant to this place to put him to shame?" Brothers and Sisters, we have to deal with an unchanging God, who will do in the future what He has done in the past because He never turns from His Purpose, and cannot be thwarted in His design. The past thus becomes a very mighty means of winning blessings from Him.

We may even use our own unworthiness as an argument with God. "Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness." David in one place pleads thus: "Lord, have mercy upon my iniquity, for it is great." That is a very singular mode of reasoning, but being interpreted it means, "Lord, why should You go about doing little things? You are a great God, and here is a great sinner; here is a fitness in me for the display of Your Grace. The greatness of my sin makes me a platform for the greatness of Your Mercy. Let the greatness of Your Love be seen in me." Moses seems to have the same on his mind when he asks God to show His great Power in sparing His sinful people. The Power with which God restrains Himself is great indeed. O Brothers and Sisters, there is such a thing as creeping down at the foot of the Throne, crouching low and crying, "O God, break me not—I am a bruised reed. Oh! Tread not on my little life, it is now but as the smoking flax. Will You hunt me? Will You come out, as David said, 'after a dead dog, after a flea'? Will you pursue me as a leaf that is blown in the tempest? Will you watch me, as Job said, as though I were a vast sea, or a great whale? No, but because I am so little, and because the greatness of Your Mercy can be shown in one so insignificant and yet so vile, therefore, O God, have mercy upon me."

There was once an occasion when the very Godhead of Jehovah made a triumphant plea for the Prophet Elijah. On that august occasion when he had bid his adversaries see whether their god could answer them by fire, you can little guess the excitement there must have been that day in the Prophet's mind. With what stern sarcasm did he say, "Cry aloud: for he is a god! Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or perhaps he sleeps, and must be awakened." And as they cut

themselves with knives, and leaped upon the altar, oh the scorn with which that man of God must have looked down upon their impotent exertions, and their earnest but useless cries! But think of how his heart must have palpitated, if it had not been for the strength of his faith, when he repaired the altar of God that was broken down, and laid the wood in order, and killed the bullock. Hear him cry, "Pour water on it. You shall not suspect me of concealing fire; pour water on the victim." When they had done so, he bids them, "Do it a second time." And they did it a second time, and then he says, "Do it a third time." And when it was all covered with water, soaked and saturated through, then he stands up and cries to God, "O God, let it be known that You only are God." Here everything was put to the test. Jehovah's own *Existence* was now put, as it were, at stake, before the eyes of men by this bold Prophet. And how well the Prophet was heard! Down came the fire and devoured not only the sacrifice, but even the wood and the stones, and even the very water that was in the trenches, for Jehovah God had answered His servant's prayer. We sometimes may do the same, and say unto Him, "Oh, by Your Deity, by Your Existence, if indeed you are God, now show Yourself for the help of Your people!"

Lastly, the grand Christian argument is *the sufferings, the death, the merit, the intercession of Christ Jesus.* Beloved, I am afraid we do not understand what it is that we have at our command when we are allowed to plead with God for Christ's sake. I met with this thought the other day: it was somewhat new to me, but I believe it ought not to have been. When we ask God to hear us, pleading Christ's name, we usually mean, "O Lord, Your dear Son deserves this of You; do this unto me because of what He merits." But if we knew it we might go farther. Supposing you should say to me, you who keep a warehouse in the city, "Sir, call at my office, and use my name, and say that they are to give you such a thing." I should go in and use your name, and I should obtain my request as a matter of right and a matter of necessity. This is virtually what Jesus Christ says to us. "If you need anything of God, all that the Father has belongs to Me; go and use My name." Suppose you should give a man your checkbook signed with your own name and left blank, to be filled up as he chose—that would be very nearly what Jesus has done in these words, "If you ask anything in My name, I will give it you." If I had a good name at the bottom of the check, I would be sure that I would get it cashed when I went to the banker with it; so when you have got Christ's name, to whom the very Justice of God has become a debtor, and whose merits have claims with the Most High, when you have Christ's name there is no need to speak with fear and trembling and bated breath. Oh, waver not and let not faith stagger! When you plead the name of Christ you plead that which shakes the gates of Hell, and which the hosts of Heaven obey, and God Himself feels the sacred power of that blessed plea!

Brothers and Sisters, you would do better if you sometimes thought more in your prayers of Christ's griefs and groans. Bring before the Lord His wounds, remind the Lord of His cries, make the groans of Jesus cry again from Gethsemane, and His blood speak again from that frozen Calvary. Speak out and tell the Lord that with such griefs, and cries, and groans to plead, you will not be denied. Such arguments as these will honor God.

III. If the Holy Spirit shall teach us how to order our cause, and how to fill our mouth with arguments, the result shall be that WE SHALL HAVE OUR MOUTH FILLED WITH PRAISES. The man who has his mouth full of arguments in prayer shall soon have his mouth full of benedictions in answer to prayer. Dear Friend, you have your mouth full this morning, have you? What of? Full of complaining? Pray the Lord to rinse your mouth out of that black stuff, for it will little avail you, and it will be bitter in your heart one of these days. Oh, have your mouth full of prayer, full of it, full of arguments so that there is room for nothing else. Then come with this blessed mouthful, and you shall soon go away with whatever you have asked of God. Only delight yourself in Him, and He will give you the desire of your heart.

It is said—I know not how truly—that the explanation of the text, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it," may be found in a very singular Oriental custom. It is said that not many years ago—I remember the circumstance being reported—the King of Persia ordered the chief of his nobility who had done something or other which greatly gratified him, to open his mouth, and when he had done so he began to put into his mouth pearls, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, till he had filled it as full as it could be, and then he bade him go his way. This is said to have been occasionally done in Oriental Courts towards great favorites. Now certainly, whether that is an explanation of the text or not, it is an illustration of it. God says, "Open your mouth with arguments," and then He will fill it with priceless mercies, gems unspeakably valuable. Would not a man open his mouth wide when he had to have it filled in such a style? Surely the most simple-minded among you would be wise enough for that. Oh, let us, then, open wide our mouth when we have to plead with God. Our needs are great, let our pleas be great, and the supply will be great also. You are not straitened in Him; you are straitened in your own heart. The Lord give you large mouths in prayer, great potency, not in the use of language, but in employing arguments.

What I have been speaking to the Christian is applicable in great measure to the unconverted, too. God give you to see the force of it, and to fly in humble prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ and to find Eternal Life in Him.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
NUMBERS 14:1-21.

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SEEING AND NOT SEEING—OR, MEN AS TREES WALKING
NO. 701

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 22, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly."
Mark 8:22-25.

OUR Savior very frequently healed the sick by a touch, for He intended to impress upon us the Truth of God that the infirmities of fallen humanity can only be removed by contact with His own blessed Humanity. He had, however, other lessons to teach, and therefore He adopted other methods of action in healing the sick. Moreover, it was wise for other reasons to manifest variety in His methods. Had our Lord cast all His miracles in one mold men would have attached undue importance to the manner by which He worked, and would have superstitiously thought more of *it* than of the Divine Power by which the miracle was accomplished. Accordingly, our Master presents us with great variety in the form of the miracles. Though they are always fraught with the same goodness, and display the same wisdom and the same power, yet He is careful to make each one distinct from its fellow, that we may behold the manifest goodness of God, and may not imagine that the Divine Savior is so short of methods as to need to repeat Himself. It is the besetting sin of our carnal natures to stay in what is seen and to forget the unseen; hence the Lord Jesus changes the outward modus operandi, or manner of working, in order that it may be clear that He is not bound to any method of healing, and that the outward operation is nothing in itself. He would have us understand that if He chose to heal by the touch, He could also heal with a word; and if He cured with a word, He could dispense even with the word and work by His mere will; that a glance of His eye was as efficacious as a touch of His hand, and that even without being visibly present, His invisible Presence could work the miracle while yet He was at a distance.

In the present case our Savior deviated from His accustomed practice, not merely in the method of healing, but also in the character of the cure. In most of the Savior's miracles the person healed was restored at once. We read of the deaf and dumb man, that not only was his mouth opened, but, what was more remarkable for one who never had heard a sound before, he spoke plainly, receiving the gift of language as well as the power to make articulate sounds. In other cases the fever left the

patient at once, the leprosy was completely healed on the spot, and the issue of blood was stayed; but here, "the Beloved Physician" went more leisurely to work, and only bestowed a part of the blessing at first, halting by the way, and making His patient consider how much was given, and how much withheld, and then by a second operation perfecting the good work. Perhaps our Lord's action in this case was directed not only by the desire to make each miracle distinct, lest men should think that like a magician He had but one mode of operating; but it may have been suggested by the particular form of the disease, and the spiritual infirmity of which it is a type. Jesus would scarcely have healed some sicknesses by degrees; it seemed necessary to deal a decisive blow and end them. The casting out of a devil, for instance, must be accomplished entirely or else it is not accomplished at all, and a leper is a leper still if but a spot remains. It is possible, however, to heal blindness by degrees, to give some little glimmer at first, and then afterwards to pour upon the eyeballs the full light of day. Perhaps it may even be necessary in some cases to make the cure gradual, that the optic nerve may grow accustomed to the light. As the eye is the emblem of the understanding, it is very possible, no, it is usual, to heal the human understanding by degrees.

The will must be changed at once; the affections must be turned instantly; most of the powers of human nature must experience a distinct and complete change; but the understanding may be enlightened by a long course of illumination. The heart of stone cannot be gradually softened, but must instantaneously be made into a heart of flesh; but this is not necessary with the understanding. The reasoning faculties may be gradually brought into proper balance and order. The soul may receive at first but a slight perception of the Truth of God, and there it may rest with comparative safety; afterwards it may come to apprehend more clearly the mind of the Spirit, and in that degree of light it may abide without serious peril, although not without loss; it may be described as seeing, but not seeing afar off; and then the ultimate restoration of the understanding may be reserved to more mature experience. Probably the spiritual sight will never be, in absolute perfection, bestowed upon us till we enter into the Light of God for which the spiritual state is intended, namely, the Glory of that place where they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them Light. The miracle before us portrays the progressive healing of a darkened understanding. The miracle cannot be used as a picture of the restoration of a willful sinner from the error of his ways, or the turning of the debauched and depraved from the filthiness of their lives; it is a picture of the darkened soul gradually illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and brought by Jesus Christ into the clear light of His Kingdom.

This morning, feeling that there are many half-enlightened souls present, I shall, by the Holy Spirit's assistance, *picture the case;* then we shall notice *the means of cure;* thirdly, we shall stop awhile and consider *the hopeful stage;* and then conclude by a short notice of the completion of the cure.

I. First, we have TO PICTURE THE CASE. It is one of a wonderfully common class nowadays; very common certainly among the new

additions to this congregation; for very many are coming to us who have been for the previous part of their lives spiritually blind, having been mere formal churchgoers, or stiff outside religionists among Dissenters.

Observe carefully the case in hand. It is a person with a darkened understanding. It is not a man who might be pictured by a person possessed with the devil. A man possessed with the devil raves, rages, is dangerous to society, must be bound with chains, watched and guarded, for he will hurt himself and injure others; but this blind person is perfectly harmless. He has no desire to injure others, and is not likely to be violent towards himself; he is sober, steady, honest, kind, and his spiritual malady may excite our pity but not our fear. If these unenlightened persons associate with the Lord's people they do not rave and rage against the saints, but respect them and love their company. They are not haters of the Cross of Christ; they are in their poor blind way even lovers of it. They are not persecutors, revilers or scoffers, nor do they run desperately in the way of wickedness; on the contrary, although they cannot see the things of God, yet they feel their way in the paths of morality in a very admirable manner, so that in some respects they might even be examples to those who can see. Furthermore, the case before us is not one of a person polluted with a contagious disease, foul and loathsome like leprosy. The leper must be put away; there must be a place reserved for him, for he contaminates all those with whom he comes in contact. Not so with this blind man who comes to the Savior. He is blind, but he does not make others blind. If he is in association with other blind persons, he does not increase their blindness, nor, if he is brought into connection with those who can see does he injure their sight in any way; they, perhaps, might even derive some benefit from association with him, for they are led to be thankful for the eyesight which they possess when they mark the darkness in which he is so sorrowfully enveloped.

It is not, therefore, the case of a person of a lascivious life or of a foul conversation; it is not at all the case of a man who would deprave your children, who would lead your son or your daughter into sin. The unenlightened people of whom we speak are beloved in our families, and very properly so, for they spread no injurious Doctrines, and set no ill examples, and even when they talk of spiritual things they make us pity them because they know so little, and we are grateful to God to think that He has opened our eyes to see the wondrous things of His Word. They are neither raving haters of God nor yet foul livers, so as to do mischief to their race; no, these people are not even incapable in any respect except the one organ of the mind's eye; it is the understanding which is darkened; but in all other senses, these people whom I am now picturing are hopeful if not healthy. They are not altogether deaf, they hear the Gospel with considerable pleasure and earnest heed. It is true they do not clearly understand it; it is very much the letter which they receive, and but in a very small degree the spirit; still, at the same time, they do hear, and they are in the way of getting a greater blessing, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." And moreover, after a certain sort, they are not dumb either, for they do pray in a manner. It is true that their prayer is scarcely spiritual, but yet it has a

kind of earnestness about it not to be despised. They have been to a place of worship from their youth up, and never neglected the outward forms of religion. Alas for them, they are still blind! But they are anxious to hear and to pray, and we trust will yet be able to do both; they are, therefore, not absolutely deaf or dumb.

Nor, moreover, do they seem to be incapable in other respects. The hand is not withered, as in the case of one whom Christ met within the Synagogue. Neither are they bowed down by grievous depression of spirit, as that daughter of Abraham who had been bowed down for many years. They are both cheerful and diligent in the ways of the Lord. If the cause of God needs assistance they are ready to assist it, and though by reason of the loss of their spiritual eyes they cannot enter into the full enjoyment of Divine things, yet they are among the most forward people we know to help on any good cause; not because they thoroughly comprehend the spirit of it nor can enter therein, for by reason of their natural blindness they are still aliens; but still there is worked in them something which is very lovely and very hopeful, for they are anxious as much as lies in them to help the cause of Christ.

In connection with all Christian congregations we have a knot of people of this kind, and in connection with some Christian churches even the most of the members are very little better; they have not received more than enough instruction to enable them to know their right hand from their left in spiritual matters. For lack of Doctrinal teaching they are left in the dark, and because there is not held up before them the form of sound words, they remain in semi-blindness, unable to enjoy the fair prospects which cheer the eyes of the enlightened Believer.

II. We have now to see OUR LORD'S METHOD OF CURE.

Every part of the miracle is suggestive. The first thing to be observed is *a friendly intervention*—his friends brought the blind man to Jesus. How many there are who do not rightly understand the fundamental Doctrine of the Gospel of Christ, and need the help of Believers! They have an affection for religion in the abstract, but they do not fully know what they must do to be saved. The great Truth of Substitution, which is the cardinal point in the Gospel, they have not yet apprehended. They scarcely know what it is to come to rest wholly upon the Lord Jesus, because of the satisfaction which He has offered to Almighty Justice. They have a sort of faith, but they have such slender knowledge that their faith brings them little or no benefit. Such people might often be blessed if more advanced Christians would try to bring them to a clearer knowledge of the Savior. Why can you not bring such souls under the sound of that ministry which has been instructive to yourself? Why can you not lay that Book in their way which was the means of opening your eyes? Why can you not bring before their minds that text of Scripture, that passage of God's Word, which first illuminated you? Would it not be a most hopeful work for us to engage in, to look for those who are not hostile to the Gospel, but simply ignorant of it, who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, and who, if they once could be furnished with the Light of God, would then have found the one thing necessary? Surely, if we look after the degraded, the debased, and the depraved who

defile our festering courts and alleys, we ought, with equal eagerness, to seek out these hopeful ones who sit under the sound of preaching which is not Gospel preaching, or who hear the true Word of God, but perceive it not! Brothers and Sisters, you would do well if you prayed for these, and if, moreover, you sought out the excellent young men and the amiable young women, and endeavored to answer the question of their tender consciences, "Oh that we knew where we might find Him!" It might be, in God's hand, the first step to their receiving spiritual eyesight if you would care for these children of mist and of the night.

When the blind man was brought to the Savior, he first received *contact with Jesus,* for Jesus took him by the hand. It is a happy day for a soul when it comes into personal contact with the Lord Jesus. Brothers and Sisters, when we are in our state of unbelief, we sit in the House of God, and Christ seems to us to be at a distance; we hear of Him, but it is as of One who has departed to ivory palaces, and who is not now among us; and even if He passes by we feel as if He did not come near to us, and so we sit and sigh, and long to feel His shadow fall upon us, or to touch, as it were, the hem of His garment. But when the soul really begins to close with Jesus, when He becomes the object of devout attention, when we feel that there is something to be grasped and realized about Him after all. When we realize that He is no distant and impalpable shade, but a veritable Existence, and an Existence having influence over us, then it is that He takes us by the hand. I know some of you have felt this. It has frequently happened on the Sunday that you felt that you must pray; you felt that the sermon was made for you; you thought someone had told the preacher about you, the Truth came so closely home—the very details of the preacher's speech fit the condition of your mind—that was our blessed Lord, I think, taking you by the hand. The service was to you no mere word-talk and word-hearing, but a mysterious hand touched you, your feelings were impressed, and your heart was conscious of peculiar emotions originating from the Presence of the Savior. Of course Jesus does not come into any physical contact with us; it is a mental, spiritual contact; the mind of the Lord Jesus lays its hand upon the mind of sinners, and by the Holy Spirit, gently influences the soul for holiness and the Truths of God.

Mark the next act, for it is peculiar. The Savior led the man to *a solitary position,* for He took him out of the town. I have noticed that when persons converted have been spiritually blind rather than willfully wicked, who have not been so much hostile as they have been ignorant, one of the first signs of their becoming Christians is the getting into retirement, and feeling their individual responsibility. Beloved, I have always hope for the man who begins to think of himself as he stands alone before God, for there are tens of thousands in England who consider themselves to be parts of a nation of Christians and born members of a Church, and thus never consider themselves as personally responsible to God. They say the confession of sin, but it is always with the whole congregation. They chant the *Te Deum,* but it is not personal but choral praise. But when a man is led, even while in the congregation, to feel as if he were alone, when he grasps the idea that true religion is of the individual and not of the community, and that confession of sin is

more fitting from his lips than from any other man—then is a gracious work commenced! There is hope of the blindest understanding when the mind begins to meditate upon its own condition and examines its own prospects. It is a sure sign that the Lord is dealing well with you if He has taken you out of the town; if you are forgetting all others, and thinking just now of yourself. Call it not selfishness; it is only such a selfishness as the highest law of our nature commands. Every man, when he is drowning, must think of himself, and if it is a justifiable selfishness to seek to preserve one's own life, much more is it to labor to escape from eternal ruin. When your own salvation is accomplished you shall have no more need to think of self, but you shall care for the souls of others; but now the highest wisdom is to think of yourself in your standing towards God, and to look to the Savior that you yourself may have Eternal Life. "He took him by the hand, and led him out of the town."

The next was a very strange act, too. He brought him under *ordained but despicable means*—He spit on his eyes. The Savior frequently used the saliva of His mouth as a means of cure, it has been said, because it was recommended by ancient physicians, but I cannot think that their opinion could have had much weight with our wonder-working Lord. It seems to me that the use of spittle connected the opening of the eye with the Savior's mouth, that is to say, it connected in type the illuminating of the understanding with the Truth of God which Christ utters. Of course spiritual eyesight comes by means of spiritual Truth, and the eye of the understanding is opened by the Doctrine which Christ speaks. Yet it seems to me that the association which we naturally put with spit is that of disgust, and that this was intentionally employed by the Savior for that very end. It was nothing but spit, though it was spit from the Savior's mouth. And so, mark you, Friend, it is very possible that God will bless you by that very Truth which you once despised, and He might even bless you through that very man against whom you spoke the most bitterly. It has often pleased God to award to His ministering servants a gracious kind of vengeance; many and many times those who were the hottest and most furious against God's own servants have received the best blessings from the hands of those men whom they most despised. You call it, "spit"—nothing but that shall open your eyes. You say, "The Gospel is a very common-place thing." It is by such common places that you shall have life. You have sneeringly declared that such a man speaks the Truth of God in a coarse and vulgar style; you shall one day bless that vulgarity, and be glad enough to receive, even after a coarse fashion, the Truth as his Master bids him speak it. I think that many of us had to notice this in our conversion, that the Lord chastised our pride by saying to us, "Those poor people of whom you thought so harshly shall be made a blessing to you, and My servant, against whom you were most filled with prejudice, shall be the man to bring you into perfect peace."

It strikes me that a great deal more than that, but all that, is in the thought of the Savior's spitting on his eyes. No powders of the merchant, no myrrh and frankincense, no costly drugs, but just a common spit on the lips; and so if you would see, my Hearer, the deep things of God, it shall not be by the philosophers, nor by the profound thinkers of the

day, but he that said unto you, "Trust Christ and live." He teaches you better philosophy than the philosophers, and he who tells you that in Him, in the Lord Jesus, dwells all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, tells you in that simple statement more than you could learn though Socrates and Plato should rise from the dead, and you could sit, a scholar, at their feet. Jesus Christ will open your eyes, and it shall be by this ignoble means the spit of His mouth.

You will further perceive that when He had spit on his eyes it is added He put His hands upon him. Did He do that in the form of *heavenly benediction?* Did He, by the laying on of His hands, bestow upon the man His blessing, and bid virtue stream from His own Person into the blind man? I think so. So, Brothers and Sisters, it is not the spit, it is not the leading of the man out of the crowd after all; it is not the ministry, it is not the preaching of the Word, it is not the hearer's thoughtfulness that shall earn spiritual blessings—it is the benediction of Him who died for sinners which confers all upon us. This Man is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sin. He who was despised and rejected of men, it is through Him and through Him only that priceless gift, such as sight to the blind, shall be given to the sons of men. We must use the means, and neither despise them nor trust them. We must get alone, for retirement is a great blessing; but we must look up, after all, to the Lord and Giver of every good gift, or else the spit had need to be wiped away in disgust, and the being alone shall only make the blind man lose his way the more effectually, and wander in the deeper darkness with less of sympathy and help.

This sketch is the photograph of some here. I believe there are persons here who from their youth up have attended places of worship without the slightest perception of spiritual life, and would have continued to do so had not the Lord been pleased to make use of friends, happy cheerful Christian friends, who said, "Come now, I think I can tell you something which you do not know." These friends by prayer and teaching brought you into contact with Jesus. Jesus touched you, influenced your mind, made you thoughtful, made you see that there was more in religion than just the mere external, made you feel that going to church or going to chapel was not everything, no, was not anything at all, unless you learned the secret, the real secret of Everlasting Life! It has been through all this that you have begun to feel that there is power in that Gospel which once you despised; and that which you sneered at as Methodism and rant, is now to you the Gospel of your salvation. Let us thank God for this, for it is by such means that eyes are opened.

III. We have now come to the third point, and we will pause a moment at A HOPEFUL STAGE. The Savior had given the man's eyes the power to see, but He had not removed completely the film which kept out the light. Hear the man. Jesus says to him, "Can you see anything?" He looks up, and the first joyful word is, *"I see!"* What a blessing! "I see!" Some of you, dear Friends, can say that—"'Whereas I was once blind, now I see.' Yes, Lord, it is not total darkness now. I do not see as much as I should, nor as much as I hope I shall, but I do see. There are many, many things I knew nothing of, which I do know something about now. The devil himself cannot make me doubt that I do see. I know I do. I used to be

quite satisfied with the outward form; if I got through the hymns and prayers, and so on, I felt satisfied; but now, though I feel I cannot see as I want to see, I can see as much as that. If I cannot see light, there is certainly darkness visible. If I cannot see salvation, I can see my own ruin. I do see my own needs and necessities; if I see nothing more, I do see these." Now, if a man can see anything; it matters not what, he certainly has sight. Whether it is a beautiful object or an ugly thing that he sees does not matter; the mere seeing of anything is proof positive that there is sight in his eyes.

So the spiritual perception of anything is proof that you have spiritual life, whether that perception makes you mourn, or whether it makes you rejoice; whether it makes you broken-hearted, or binds up your heart; if you do see it, you must have the power of sight—that is clear enough, is it not? But hear the man again. He says, "I see *men."* That is better still. Of course the poor fellow had once been able to see, or else he would not have known the shape of a man. "I see men," he says. Yes, and there are some here who have enough sight to be able to distinguish between one thing and another, so as to know this from that. Though you were as blind as bats once, nobody could make you believe that baptismal regeneration was the same thing as the regeneration of the Word of God; you can see the difference between these two things at any rate. One would think anybody might; but a great many cannot. You can see the difference between mere formal and external worship and spiritual worship—you can see that. You can see enough to know that there is a Savior, that you need a Savior, that the way of salvation is by faith in Christ, that the salvation which Jesus gives really saves us from sinning, and brings those who receive it safe to Eternal Glory. Thus it is clear that you can see something, and you know within a little while what that something is.

Listen, however, to the blind man, for here comes in the word that spoils it to a great extent—"I see men *as trees, walking."* He could not tell whether they were men or trees, except that they were walking, and he knew that trees did not walk, and therefore they could not be trees. Objects were a confused blot before his eyes. He knew from their motion that they must be men, but he could not tell exactly by sight whether they were men or trees. Many precious souls are waiting at this hopeful but uncomfortable stage. They *can see.* Bless God for that! They will never be thoroughly blind again, for if they can see the Man Jesus, and the tree on which He died, they make but one object of them if they please, for Christ and His Cross are one. Eyes which cannot clearly see Jesus may yet dimly see Him, and even a dim sight will save the soul.

Observe that this man's sight was very *indistinct*—a man or a tree—he could not tell. So is it with the first sight that is given to many spiritually blind persons. They cannot distinguish between Doctrine and Doctrine. The work of the Spirit and the work of the Savior they frequently confuse in their minds. They possess Justification and they possess Sanctification, but it is probable they could not tell you which was which. They have received imparted righteousness of heart, and they have also received the Imputed Righteousness of Christ, but between the imparted righteousness and the Imputed Righteousness they can

scarcely distinguish; they have them both, but they do not know which is which—at least not so as to be able to write down the definitions, or tell them to their fellow men. They can see, but they cannot see as they should see. They see men as trees walking. Their sight, in addition to being indistinct, is very *exaggerating*. A man is not as big as a tree, but they magnify the human stature into the towering timber. And so, half-enlightened people exaggerate Doctrines. If they receive the Doctrine of Election they cannot be content to go as far as Scripture goes—they make a tree of the man by dragging in reprobation. If they get a hold of the precept, Baptism, or whatever it may be, they exaggerate its proportions, and make it a sort of all-in-all. Some get one impulse and some get another, and it is all through mistaking a man for a tree. It is a great mercy that they see doctrine at all and precept at all, but it would be a greater mercy if they could see it as it is, and not as it now appears to them.

This exaggeration generally leads to *alarm*, for if I see a man walking up to me who is as tall as a tree, I am naturally afraid that he will fall on me, and I get out of the way. Many persons are afraid of God's Doctrines because they think they are as high as trees. They are none too high. God has made them of the right stature, but blindness exaggerates them, and makes them more terrible and high than they might be. They are afraid to read books upon certain Truths of God, and they fight shy of all men who preach them only because they cannot see those Doctrines in the right light, but are alarmed with their own confused vision of it.

In connection with this exaggeration and this fear, there is to such people *an utter loss of the enjoyment* which comes from being able to perceive beauty and loveliness. The noblest part of a man is after all his countenance. We like to catch the features of our friend—that gentle eye, that tender expression, that winning look, that radiant smile, that expressive glow of benevolence upon his face, that towering forehead—we like to see all; but this poor man could see none of these, for he could scarcely tell a man from a tree, could not discover those softer lines of the great Master Artist which make true beauty. He could only say, "It is a man," but whether a black man, black as night or fair as the morning, he did not know and could not tell, and whether sour and morose, or kind and gentle, he could not distinguish. So it is with these persons who have obtained some spiritual sight. They cannot see the details of the Doctrines. You know, Brothers and Sisters, it is the details in which lies the beauty. If I trust Jesus as my Savior I shall be saved, but the enjoyment of faith comes from knowing Him in His Person, in His offices, in His work, in His present, and past, and future. We perceive His true beauty, by studying Him, and observing Him carefully, and with holy watchfulness. So it is with the Doctrines; the mere whole of the Doctrine, in the gross is blessed, but it is when we come to take the Doctrine to pieces that we gain the purest enjoyment. "Yes," says the clown, as he looks at a fine painting, such, for instance, as Paul Potter's famous Bull at the Hague, "it's certainly a rare picture," and then he goes away. But the artist sits down and studies its details. There is to him a beauty in every touch and shade which he understands and appreciates. Many Believers have Light enough to know the faith in its bare outline, but

they have not observed the filling up, and the minutiae wherein the sweetest comfort will always be found by the spiritually educated child of God. They can see, but they "see men as trees, walking."

Although I know that the most of you, my Brothers and Sisters, have traveled far beyond this stage, yet I know there are hundreds of God's people who are still lingering there, and hence it is, when Satan gets the upper hand, that sects, and parties, and theories arise. If a number of people with good eyes meet together and look at an object, they will very nearly agree in the description of what they see; but if you select an equal number of men with eyes so weak that they can scarcely tell a man from a tree, they will make no end of confusion, and likely enough fall to quarrelling. "It is a man," cries one; "he walks." "It is a tree," cries the second; "it is too tall to be a man!" When half-blind men grow willful and despise their teachers, and will not learn as the Holy Spirit ordains to teach, they set up their ignorance for knowledge, and perhaps lead other half-enlightened ones into the ditch with them. Even where a holy modesty prevents this mischievous result, this half-sight is still to be lamented, for it leaves men in sorrow when they might rejoice, and lets them mourn over Truth which if understood would fill their mouths with song all the day long. Many are troubled about Election; now if there is a Doctrine in this Book which ought to make Believers sing all day, and all night too, it is just the Doctrine of Electing Love and Distinguishing Grace of God. Some people are frightened over this and some over that, whereas if they understood the Truth, instead of flying from it as from an enemy, they would run into its arms.

IV. Having given this sketch of the man in this transition state, we close by noting the ULTIMATE COMPLETENESS OF THE CURE.

Brothers and Sisters, be grateful for any sort of light. Without the Grace of God we could not have a ray of it. One ray of light is more than we deserve. If we were shut up in the blackness of darkness forever, how could we complain? Do we not deserve, since we shut our eyes against God, to be doomed to perpetual darkness? Be thankful, then, for the least gleam of light, but do not so prize what you have as not to wish for more. That man is still sadly blind who does not care to see more. It is a bad sign of unhealthiness when we have no desire to grow. When we are satisfied that we know all the Truth of God, and cannot be taught any more, it is probable that we need to begin at the beginning. One of the first lessons in the school of wisdom is to know that we are naturally fools, and *that* man is growing wise who is growing conscious of his own deficiency and ignorance. But when the Lord Jesus Christ brings a man to see a little, and to desire to see more, He does not leave him till He has led him into all the Truths of God.

We find that the Savior, to complete the cure, *touched His patient again.* A renewal of your contact with the Savior must be the means of your perfection, as it was your first means of enlightenment. Pray for Divine Grace to be close to Christ, in intimate acquaintance with His blessed Person, in sole dependence upon His merit; study His Character, desire to commune with Him for yourself, and to see Him with your own eyes by faith and not with the eyes of another—this shall be the means of giving you clearer Light. The Divine touch does it all. I suppose that

when the man's eyes were fully opened, *the first person He saw was Jesus,* for he had been taken away from the crowd, and could only see men at a distance. Blessed vision, to drink in the sight of that face, to perceive the beauties of that matchless Lover of our souls. Oh the joy! One might be content to be blind forever if *He* were not to be seen; but when Jesus is seen, oh the heavenly delight of being rescued from the blindness which concealed Him from our eyes! Believer, above all things, pray that you may know Him, and understand Him. With all your heart, get an understanding of Him. Count a Doctrine precious, only because it is a throne on which He sits. Think much of the precept, but make it not to be a legal stone to hide Him in the sepulcher; think only of it as it is illustrated and set forth in His life; and even your own experience, care little for it if it does not point as with a finger to Christ. Consider that you only grow when you grow up in Him. "Grow in Grace," says the Apostle, but he adds, "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." "Grow up," he says, but what does he add? "Grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ Jesus." Ask to see, but put the prayer in this form—"Sir, we would see Jesus." Pray for sight, but let it be a sight of the King in His beauty, that you may one day see the land that is very far off. You are nearing clearness of vision when you can see only Jesus; you are coming out of cloud-land into the brightness of day, when, instead of seeing men as trees, you behold the Savior. Then you may let the men and the trees take care of themselves.

We read that our Lord bade His patient, "Look up." If we would see we must not look below us; no light springs from this dusky earth. If we would see, we must not look within us; it is a dark, black cavern, full of everything that is evil. We must look *up*. Every good gift and every perfect gift comes from above, and we must look up for it. Meditating upon Jesus and resting upon Him, we must look up to our God. Our soul must consider her Lord's perfection, and not dream of her own. She must muse upon His greatness, and not on any fancied greatness of her own. We must look up—not on our fellow servants, or upon the externals of worship, but up to God Himself. We must look, and as we look up we shall find the Light of God.

We are told that at last, "the man could see every man clearly." Yes, when the great Physician sends the patient home, you may rest assured that his cure is fully worked. It was all well with him in the superlative degree. He saw, he saw every man, he saw every man clearly. May this be the happy lot of many a half-enlightened one here present! Be not satisfied, my dear Friends, with being saved; desire to know *how* you are saved, *why* you are saved, the *method* by which you are saved. It is a Rock on which you stand, I know, but think upon the questions—how you were put on that Rock, by whose love you came there, and why that love was set on you. I would to God that all the members of this Church were not only *in* Christ Jesus, but *understood* Him, and knew by the assurance of the understanding to where they have attained. Be always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. Remember there are many grave distinctions in Scripture which will save you a world of trouble if you will know and remember them. Try to understand the difference between the old nature and the new. Never

expect the old nature to improve into the new, for it never will. The old nature can never do anything but sin, and the new nature never can sin. They are two distinct principles, never confuse them. Do not see men as trees walking. Do not confuse Sanctification and Justification. Remember that the moment you trust in Christ you are Justified as completely as you will be in Heaven, but Sanctification is a gradual work which is carried on from day to day by God the Holy Spirit. Distinguish between the great Truth of God that Salvation is all of God, and the great lie that men are not to be blamed if they are lost. Be well assured that Salvation is of the Lord, but do not lay damnation at God's door. Be not ashamed if men call you a Calvinist, but hate with all your heart Antinomianism.

On the other hand, while you believe human responsibility, never run into the error of supposing that man ever turns to God of his own free will. There is a narrow line between the two errors, and ask for Divine Grace to see it. Ask for Grace neither to fall into the whirlpool nor to be dashed against the rock; to be neither a slave of this system nor that. Never say of one text of Scripture, "Be still, I cannot endure you," nor yet of another, "I believe you, and you alone." Seek to love the whole Word of God, to get an insight into every Truth revealed. Pray to have God's Word given to you not as so many discordant books, but as a whole, and seek to grasp the Truth as it is in Jesus in all its compactness and unity. I would urge you, if you have got sight which enables you to see at all, to fall on your knees and cry unto the great Sight-Giver, "O Master, still go on; take every film away, remove every cataract, and if it should be painful to have my prejudices cut away or burnt out of my eyes, yet do it, Lord, until I can see in the clear Light of the Holy Spirit, and shall be worthy to enter into the gates of the Holy City, where they see You face to face."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MARK 8:1-30.

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PETER'S THREE CALLS
NO. 702

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

"The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus."
John 1:37.

"And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."
Matthew 4:18, 19.

"And when He had called His twelve disciples... the first, Simon, who is called Peter."
Matthew 10:1, 2.

PERHAPS you are aware that there has always been a certain set of persons who have tried to disprove the Gospel narrative by picking out what they suppose to be discrepancies, especially in the statements of Matthew and Luke. Four independent persons have each given us a separate story of the Life of Christ, each story being written with a distinct objective. Of course, from the fact that each one was written with a distinct objective, it was natural that one Evangelist should give more attention to certain points in the history of Christ than the others, and it was natural for his eyes to be fixed upon those things which most concerned the point which he had in hand, and for his ears to be most quick to catch those words which had a relation to the objective he was driving at throughout the whole of his Gospel. Now, these divergences and differences have been so many pegs upon which quibblers have hung their quibbles, and these men have constantly been saying, "How do you reconcile Matthew with John in a certain place," or, "how do you reconcile Mark, in such another place, with Luke?" It is not always easy to harmonize the testimony of four perfectly honest witnesses upon the same subject. I will venture to say, that if there should be a simple accident upon the railway, and four persons present were to give their accounts of it with rigid exactness, yet they would each one be likely to mention some point not mentioned by the other, and, moreover, differ upon the points which they notice in common. Although we might be morally convinced that they all spoke the truth, yet it would be difficult to put the story together so as to make a harmonious whole of it. Sometimes it is not easy to put the stories of the Evangelists together, and many of the "Gospel Harmonies," so called, which have been produced by very admirable writers, are not quite correct, but show at once the difficulty attaching to that which some have been trying to attempt, and which perhaps will never be fully carried out, namely, the making of it into one harmonious story.

It so happens, however, that the difficulty in the case before us is no difficulty at all. John tells us that Peter was called by Christ through the preaching of John the Baptist, who bore witness that Jesus was Christ,

the Messiah. Matthew, on the other hand, tells us that Peter and his brother were fishing, that Christ was walking by the Lake of Galilee, and that as He passed by He saw these men fishing, called them by name, and said, "Follow me." Now, the key to the whole may be found in the fact that there was yet a third call, and that afterwards Jesus called not Peter and Andrew alone, but the whole 12 of His disciples, and set them apart to be Apostles; and so we gather from this last call that the other two might perhaps have been different and distinct from each other. Coming to look at the subject, we find that the first call was the call at Peter's conversion, which called him to be a disciple while still at his daily avocation; the second was the call of Peter, not to be a mere disciple, but to be an Evangelist; and the third was the call of Peter, not to be an Evangelist or a common servant of the Master, but to be a leader, to take a yet higher grade, and to become one of the 12 who would be associated with Christ as the founders of the new system of religion, and witnesses of the life of Christ Himself.

I. I want you, then, just for a moment, to bear in mind that we have under our consideration THREE CALLS—(1) the first is that which Christ gave to Peter when He called him out of darkness into the marvelous Light of God, blessing to him at first the testimony of John, and then by manifesting Himself to him; (2) the second is the call by which the servant, already converted, already willing, is bid to put himself into closer relationship with his Lord—to come out and be no longer a servant whose allegiance is true but not manifest, but to show that fidelity by following his Master; (3) and the third call is that which the Savior gives only to a few whom He has picked out and chosen to do some special work, who shall have fellowship with Him more closely still, and become captains in the ranks of—

"The sacramental host of God's elect."

We shall speak of these three calls in the order in which they occur. Very briefly I shall go through the subject, speaking at length about the second call which Peter received.

1. Notice the personal call to be a *disciple*. These three calls are given in a certain order. Observe where it begins. Peter was not called to be an Evangelist before he was called to be a follower. Christ begins by first teaching us our own need of Him, and our own sin, and then revealing Himself to us as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It is a presumption—what if I say an accursed treason—against the Majesty of the great Head of the Church, if any man pretends to reverse this order. You must first be called yourselves into Christ before you may dare to even so much as think about being called into the ministry or into the service of Christ. You cannot serve Him until first of all you have learned to sit at His feet. Before you can serve God you must have a new heart and a right spirit. The blind eye is not fit for the service of Christ. The eye must be illuminated, the understanding must be instructed. That stubborn will of yours cannot bear the yoke of Christ; it must be subdued. "You must be born-again." Should there be some among you here tonight who are teaching in Sunday schools, distributing tracts, or in any other way are trying to serve God, and yet are not yourselves saved, I would very affectionately, but with great earnestness, entreat you to consider that you are reversing the natural and proper order of

things. Your first business is at home, in your own soul and your own heart. I will not apply to you the words of the Prophet, "Unto the wicked God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes?" But I think there is a spirit in those terrible words, which might well have an application to you. How can you be a guide until you are first able yourself to see, for "if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch." How can you, diseased and leprous, begin to heal others, for it shall be said to you, "Physician, heal yourself"? How can you, when the beam is in your own eye, go abroad to point out the beams and the specks which are in other men's eyes?

Oh, take care, take care lest this very service to Christ, as you think it to be, is an injury to you, for you may serve Christ after a sort till you begin to think that you do so much, and do it so well, that you must be a Christian! You may spin for yourself a robe which shall seem sufficient to cover you, and you may go and dress in this cobweb, this mere figment of a fictitious righteousness, and persuade yourself that you are wearing the robe of Christ's Righteousness, whereas you shall be found at the last to be naked, and poor, and miserable. Oh, I pray you to understand those words, "Behold the Lamb of God." Behold Him for yourselves, see Him for yourselves. Do not talk about being a fisher of men; do not speak of being a servant whose loins are girt, and whose lamp is trimmed, until first you have become as a little child, for unless you so become you cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. But, dear Friends, after the first call has been received, it is very delightful to observe the Christian receiving the second. He is called into *active service*. Simon Peter became a disciple, but all that he meant by that was, "I acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah," and he went away and continued with his good brother in the fishing business. It never, perhaps, entered into his head that he was to do anything more than to cultivate a quiet peaceful faith, and walk in a life consistent with that faith. But all of a sudden he sees this famous Man of Nazareth walking by the seaside, who addresses him by name, and says to him, "Follow Me." And in a moment, putting down his net, and leaving his family, he left all to follow Christ with his two companions James and John, equally famous in the battle-roll of Christian heroes, he left all to follow Christ.

Now, I may have some here tonight who are saved. You are the disciples of Jesus, but I regret to say that He has not yet been seen by you as calling you into His service. You have joined the Church, and you have been baptized into the faith of Christ, and so far it is good; but as yet it has not struck you that you are to be actively engaged for Christ. Now, it is not in my power to call you to the service, nor to indicate to you what special form that service shall take; but, my dear Friends, I do pray that you may have another revelation of the Lord Jesus yet more full and bright, and that He may say to you, "Come, you are not your own; you are bought with a price; serve Me; arise, gird up your loins, and wait upon the Lord." I trust that He may lay His hand upon you tonight, and say to you as He did to the assembled twelve, "As My Father has sent Me into the world, even so send I you," and may you have Divine Grace to obey the mandate, and though it may be something which has been distasteful to you, some Christian engagement in which you have

never been occupied before, may you have Grace to say, "Here am I, Lord, send me," whatever the business may happen to be. Ah, what would a Church be if it consisted altogether of persons of this sort? What vigor should we have in the Christian army if every soldier felt called to fight! But some of you do not realize your duty in this respect. I would that you would take a farther step. I would that the spirit of service fell upon you, so that you did not merely wear the robe of righteousness but the mantle of service, too. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, by the Love which—

"***Saw you ruined in the Fall,***
Yet loved you notwithstanding all,"

by the Love which gave up its honor and its glory, and took upon itself the form of a Servant for your sakes; by the Love which sweat great drops of blood in the Garden, by the Love which emptied out its heart that you might be redeemed from ruin, I pray you, hear Jesus saying to you, "Follow Me," and do follow Him in active, industrious, persevering consecration, and from this day forth, if you have up to now been but a sleeping partner in the great Christian firm, if you have been content to ride upon the Gospel chariot, instead of drawing it or adding an impulse to its wheels, may you say, "My Lord, fill me with the zeal which possessed You; kindle in me the same spirit of service which burned so brightly in Yourself, and as You did call Peter, and Andrew, and James, and John, so call me, and say, "Follow Me." You notice, then, that this second call follows the first call, and it is a blessed thing when it does thus succeed and is obeyed.

3. But in the third text which I gave you, you find Peter called to another service above that of an ordinary worker, that is to say, he is called to be an *Apostle*.

I will venture here to trace an analogy between this and the calling of the Christian minister. You will observe that this call comes last. The call to the Apostleship does not come first. Peter is first the disciple; secondly the Evangelist; and thirdly the Apostle. So, no man is called to be specially set apart to the ministry of Christ, or to have a share in the Apostleship until he has first of all himself known Christ, and until, secondly, as an ordinary Christian he has fully exercised himself in all the duties which are proper to Christian service. Now, some people turn this topsy-turvy. Young men who have never preached are set apart to the ministry, those who have never visited the sick, never instructed the ignorant, and are totally devoid of any knowledge of Gospel experience except the little of their own, are supposed to be dedicated to the Christian ministry. I believe this to be a radical and a fatal error. Brothers and Sisters, we have no right to thrust a Brother into the ministry until he has first given evidence of his own conversion, and has also given proof not only of being a good average worker but something more. If he cannot labor in the church before he pretends to be a minister, he is good for nothing. If he cannot while he is a private member of the church perform all the duties of that position with zeal and energy, and if he is not evidently a consecrated man while he is a private Christian, certainly you do not feel the guidance of God's Holy Spirit to bid him enter the ministry. No man has a right to aspire to come into that office until, like the knights of old, he has first won his spurs,

and has shown that he is really devoted to Christ by having served Him as others have done.

Let me say that it would be a very great mercy for this Christian Church if some persons would not take this last place at all, but would be content to stop in the second one. There are many men who when set apart to the Christian ministry are a drag and burden to the churches as well as to other people, who if they had but given up themselves as ordinary members to Christian service might have been a very great blessing and honor to the Church. One of the kindest pieces of advice I could give to some of our ministerial friends would be, "Go home, Brother; take off your black coat and your white tie, and put yourself into some honest way of getting a living; just think about whether you were not more serviceable to the Church when you were a carpenter or a tradesman, and when you were earning a considerable sum of money at your own ordinary avocation, than you are now, when you are necessarily dependent upon the gifts and generosity of God's servants without having the ability and the talent which are necessary to make you a leader in the Lord's host." I pray the day may come when we shall all see this, and never think of giving ourselves to the ministry before conversion, and even then aspire not after special work until first of all we have proved that we can serve the Lord in our ordinary life.

Occasionally I have Brothers come to me asking to be received into our College, and one singular reason which some of them give me why they believe that they are called to the ministry is this: "You see, Sir, I could not get on at anything else, and therefore I thought Providence must have ordained me to be a minister." I never say a word about that, but I am very clear that if a man is such a fool that he can do nothing else but preach, it is a great pity that he should be allowed to do that; and when a Brother tells me that, I sometimes venture to ask him if he thinks that God wants only the biggest fools to serve Him. I question him as to whether there should not be given up to God's service the very pick, and prime, and flower of the Christian Church, those men who, if they had addicted themselves to commerce, might have taken the lead, or who, if they had given themselves to the bar or to the profession of surgery or medicine, would have stood in the front rank? I believe, Brothers and Sisters, we need strong men to take such a position, and that the Lord Jesus Christ has a keen eye, and when He does call a man He calls him to something that he is fit for. Take the cases of Peter and Paul. Peter was a fisherman, it is true, but a fisherman of such a peculiar breed that it would be well if God would find us more of the same sort who would become fishers of men; and as for Paul, he was one well-skilled and learned in all matters, and just fitted and adapted to the work which the Master gave him to do.

II. I have thus noticed these three calls; but I want now to direct your earnest and particular attention to the second call, because of the lessons to be learned from the CHARACTER OF THE MEN CHOSEN, and the NATURE OF THE WORK entrusted to them.

The second call is recorded in the fourth Chapter of Matthew and the 18th verse; and it deserves our attention because we perceive that these Brothers were called to the service of Christ while they were engaged in their ordinary avocations.

It seems to have been early in the morning, for Peter was just starting on his work, and was casting his net into the sea; and in the 21st verse we find that James and John were mending their nets, so that they were all industrious in their ordinary calling. There is a notion abroad among some persons that they cannot serve God unless they neglect their ordinary work. This used to be a complaint brought against the Methodists in the olden time. I believe it was a great lie; but it was stated that they were so earnest in listening to sermons that they made bad servants and bad trades people. If it were so it was a very grievous fault, but I do not think it ever was the case. However, let none of us fall into it. If I were a Christian and a fisherman, I would like to catch more fish than anybody else. If I were a Christian and a shoe-black, I would desire to clean people's boots so that they shone better than any other shoe-black could make them shine. If I were a Christian employer, I would desire to be the best employer, and if a Christian employee the best employee. Our Christianity, I think, shows itself more, at any rate to the world, in the pursuits of daily life, than it does in the engagements of the House of God. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." I scarcely need give that exhortation here, but when you do assemble yourselves together, come not up to God's House having the blood of other duties upon your spirits. You are a mother with little children, and it is probably your duty to be at home rather than to be at the Prayer Meeting. It may sometimes be your business, as a husband, to take turns with your wife, and let her come out to the House of God, instead of always taking the privilege yourself. It may be the case with some of you that your trade may absolutely require you to be behind the counter both on Lecture and on Prayer Meeting night, and though I would have you here if possible, and if you do go anywhere, go to the House of God, yet do not let it ever be said, or even whispered, that you did not attend to your business, and that you came to grief because the things of God were cared for, and your business in consequence neglected.

I think it never should be so. I like to remember that after Jesus Christ had gone away; after He was Crucified, died, had been buried, and had risen again, where did He find Peter? Why, He found him fishing again! That is right, Peter. Follow Christ by all manner of means when He bids you, but when there is nothing to do in the service of Christ go back to fishing again. Oh, but some people seem to think that hard work in attending to ordinary business is not spiritual-minded in a Christian. Nonsense! Out with that difficulty, if any of you are troubled by it. Just ask the Lord to clear your brains and brush away such cobwebs as these, for we shall never have genuine Christianity in the world while such nonsense remains. Nonsense about giving up the world, meaning thereby living in laziness! The truest Christian is the working man, who so labors for God that he does not neglect the common duties of life. The best form of Christianity is found in the Christian who is a Christian behind the counter, a Christian in the street, a Christian in the marketplace, a Christian anywhere; and who, wherever and whenever he may be found, is like his Master—"diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

I think no man will ever serve Christ aright who does not show some energy in other things. I think the Savior chose these two men, not only out of Sovereign Grace unto Salvation, but also because He saw about them a zeal in the pursuit of fishery which seemed to mark them out as being the very men to be made useful in His own cause. Notice the character of the men who were thus called to work for Christ; they were active, diligent men, engaged in their own calling. Notice what their occupation was. When Christ called them He said, "You are fishers, and you shall be fishers all your lives; but now you are fishers of fish, and I want you to be fishers of men." He mentions their vocation, and the work He is going to give them. O my Brothers and Sisters, if you are saved I pray that Jesus may give you that second call, so that you may be earnest "fishers of men"!

There is a great deal in that sentence, "fishers of men," a very great deal more than we can bring out now. A *fisherman*, you know, *must be acquainted with the sea*. Peter knew the Lake of Galilee; I dare say there was not a creek or an inlet in it with which he was not acquainted; he knew the deep places where some kinds of fish were to be found, and the shallow places where others could be caught. And so if you would serve Christ you must know a good deal about men; you must study human nature, and you must watch your opportunities of doing good. You know there are some places where you can meet with more sinners than in others, and there is a certain way of dealing with one disposition, and quite another way of dealing with another. If you are to be a "fisher of men," you must take good stock of the neighborhood where you live. If you would be a "fisher of men" in the Tabernacle, I hope you will know the people near whom you sit, for as you know them, and their pursuits in daily life, and their characters and dispositions, you will be more likely to be blessed, by the help of God's Spirit, in bringing them to a knowledge of the Truth of God. A fisherman must be acquainted with the locality where he has to work.

A *fisherman must also know how to attract the fish.* I saw on Lake Como, when we visited Bellagio, some men fishing. They had torches burning in their boats, and the fish were attracted to them by the glare of the light. You must know how to get the fish together. You know there is such a thing as the bait for the fishes. You must know how to attract men. The preacher does this by using images, symbols, and illustrations. You must know how to catch the fish, throwing out first, perhaps, not a remark directly to the point, because that might be unwise, but a side remark, which shall lead to another, and yet another. If you are to be a "fisher of men" you will need your wits about you. It will not do to blunder over men's souls. Fish are not caught by every boy who chooses to take a pin and a piece of cotton and make his way to the pond. Fish need a fisherman, and there is a sort of congruity between the fish and the man who catches them. I do not wonder that Izaak Walton could catch fish. He seems to have been born and made on purpose for it, and so there are some men who are made on purpose for winning souls. They naturally care for their fellows, and they have such a way of putting the Truth of God that as soon as they speak men say, "Here is a man come who knows all about me, and knows how to deal with me," and they at once yield to his influence. Oh that I had hundreds of such in this

Church! I have a good share of them, and I bless God every time I remember them. God has called them, and has made them true fishers of men; they know about men, and also how to attract them.

The fisherman must be a man who can wait with patience. Oh the patience of a fisherman! "We have toiled all night," said the disciples, "and have taken nothing." You cannot be a fisherman unless you are willing to sit and watch, especially if you angle. There you may sit for hours and hours together, and at last, when the float begins to move, you think you have got your fish, but probably it is only a weed or a frog, and you may watch, and watch, and watch again, and nothing will come of it. Ah, but it is harder work still to wait in Christ's service, to preach 20 times and have no conversions, perhaps to go on teaching in a Sunday school and to see no heart-breaking work done, no sinners crying "What must I do to be saved?" You have to go to your knees and say, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" You will need something within to help you to wait thus; you will need the Holy Spirit Himself dwelling in you to supply you with Divine Patience, or else you will throw up your work, give away your nets, and say, "I will do something that pays me better than this."

A fisherman, too, *is one who must be able to take risks.* Especially was this so on the Lake of Galilee, for that, like many other lakes, was subject to fierce storms. The winds sometimes came rushing down from the mountains, and before the fisherman could take in his sail his boat would be upset. And truly every worker for Christ must expect squalls and stormy weather. Do not think, dear Friends, to serve Jesus Christ in those kid gloves and in that nice dainty style of yours. That is not the way in which fish are caught out at sea; it is rough work, and requires a man who can let the wind howl about him without being afraid of his fine curls, or of having the perfume taken out of them. It needs a man who has a bold face and a brave heart, and who when the storm comes looks up to the God of Storms, and feels that he is on his Master's service, and may therefore count upon his Master's protection. May the Lord call many members of this Church to such work as this, and when the Master shall drag home our net full of big fishes, we shall have a rich reward for all the toils of Christian labor.

The fisherman, once again, must be one who has learned both how to persevere and how to expect. The fisherman goes on, and on, and on, and fishes, not sometimes but continually. As Christ's good sower must take the precept, "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand," so also must His fisherman. "We have toiled all night and taken nothing; nevertheless, at Your command we will let down the net." But I said he must also learn to expect. He must have twinkling in his soul, like a bright particular star, the hope that he shall drag his net to land full of fishes at the last. Beloved, we shall not labor in vain; we shall not spend our strength for nothing. We may not live to see the result of the Truth which we proclaim, but—

"The precious seed shall never be lost,
For Grace insures the crop."

We must learn to believe in the indestructibility of every truthful testimony, in the immortality of every good deed, in the resurrection of every buried word to live in the sight of God. We must—

"Learn to labor and to wait."

There are three words which have been running in my mind for the last few days, and have seemed to work themselves into me, and I hope I may long keep them. One word is Work, another is Wait, and the other is Pray. Work, work, work! Wait, wait, wait! Pray, pray, pray! I think that these three words will enable a man to be, under God, a true and successful fisher of men.

I have thus described the sort of men who were called, and the work which Christ gave them to do over and above the work in which they were engaged.

I now want you to notice *the prompt obedience* of Peter to this call.

I wonder how it was that Peter came directly. Christ said, "Follow Me." We know that Peter was a disciple, and consequently, his heart was ready to receive the word which called him to be a servant. It is of no use for me to call some of you to follow Christ, and work for Him as "fishers of men," for if you were to obey, you could not do it acceptably, because you are not the children of God. But you who are saved have something in your hearts that will echo to the exhortation, "Follow me," so that I think you need only to have a good work set fairly before you, and to know what it is that the Master requires of you, and you will say at once, "Lord, I will do it," for—

"'Tis love that makes our cheerful feet
In swift obedience move."

When the heart loves Christ, then the path of duty, which before was rough and rugged, becomes straight and smooth, if not flowery, and the soul says—

"Help me to run in Your commands,
'Tis a delightful road;
Nor let my heart, nor feet, nor hands,
Offend against my God."

Beloved Friend, very much of the excellence of our service to Christ will depend upon the instantaneous way in which we do it when we know it to be a duty. I believe that debating with oneself about duty is a very dangerous thing. David said, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Your Commandments." Peter did not say, "Lord, let me stop and dry these nets, and hang them up, and bring the boat to shore, and then cast anchor and leave it right," nor did James and John say, "Master, let us go home and kiss that dear mother of ours, and let us see that Zebedee has somebody to take our place," but, immediately they left their nets and followed Christ. May I urge upon you the habit of falling into the line of duty instantly. When soldiers are being drilled I like to see the way in which the word of command is obeyed the instant it is given. "Right about face!" and the whole line turns right about at once. The thing is done, we say, mechanically. It should be so with us. But I know how it is; we get a right good thought of something we ought to do, but we stop and say, "Now, shall I do it, and when shall I do it?" And for the first hour or two we mean to do it, but by the next day we think it possible that we will decline it, and perhaps when a week is over we give it up altogether.

I believe that this is so with many, many Christians in the matter of Believers' Baptism—to give one instance out of many, they say, "Well, I used to think of it when I was young, and I then believed it was my duty,

and I guess I think it is my duty now if I really came to consult the Word of God about it, but I have put it off so long; well, perhaps I may see to it one of these days," while there is another and far more likely "perhaps," namely, that having procrastinated so long over that one duty, they will allow it to go by default. Do not toy with Christian service, Brothers and Sisters! There would have been more earnest Whitefields in the world, more Wesleys, more devoted Brainerds and Martyns, if men obeyed the call of God instead of taking counsel of flesh and blood, and considering this, that, and the other, and then resolving not to obey. Remember, it is possible for us to have Divine Grace in the heart, and yet to be disobedient. We have many such mournful specimens. We cannot but hope that they will enter Heaven, for they are washed in the precious blood, and clothed in the Savior's Righteousness, but they do little, if anything, for Christ, because they have tampered with His calls, they have violated convictions, and have started back from duties in the exercise of their unbelief, instead of pressing forward in the glory and the majesty of a simple faith in Christ Jesus.

If you feel that you have anything to do, do it immediately! If God calls you to preach before you go home, do it in the street! And if there is anything which claims your immediate attention, if there is a poor person you ought to relieve, if there is anyone to whom you ought to speak before leaving this place, I beseech you do not trifle with the conviction, but as faithful servants of Jesus Christ, being saved, and professing to love Him, I pray you, at once, to do whatever you feel you ought to do for Him. I have heard of the question being asked in a school, what was the meaning of the text, "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." One said, it meant that it should be done truthfully; and another, that it should be done unanimously; but a third said, it meant, that it should be done without asking any questions, and that answer was a good one, for we who know and love Christ should be willing to do His will without asking any questions.

I must not, however, keep you much longer. I will notice, lastly, that when the call came to Peter in the shape of "Follow Me," *it must have suggested to him many thoughts;* for it contained, in addition to mere service, privilege as well as duty. There was a book written not many years ago by an excellent Divine, to which I cannot quite subscribe, I mean Dr. Bushnell's *Higher Life.* I cannot subscribe to all that is in it, but I believe that there is a period in the life of some Christians when they rise to a platform elevated above ordinary Christianity, almost as much as ordinary Christianity is elevated above the world. I think that in addition to the first call by which we are brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvelous Light, there does come to the Christian, when the Spirit of God works mightily with him, another call by which he is brought into greater familiarity with the Lord Jesus, taught more of conformity to Him in His sufferings, and made to be more fully a partaker of the height, and depth, and breadth, and length of that Love which passes all understanding. Such a call seems to me to be imaged in this call of Peter.

Have you been living, my dear Sister, at a distance from Christ? Have you been obliged to sing the hymn—

"'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?'"

I do pray for you, as one of the greatest privileges I could ask God for on your behalf, that Christ may come to you afresh now, and be formed in your heart anew, the Hope of Glory, in such a way that you may follow Him into close practical fellowship and earnest unstaggering faith. Believe me, it is life to believe in Christ, however little, but it is life in health and vigor to believe in Christ with a faith that does not flinch. To have Christ and not to see Him is Salvation, but to have Him and to see Him is Salvation rapturously enjoyed. To be saved and not to know it is a small privilege, but to be saved and to know it, no, to know Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, and to sit with Him, and sup with Him, and to feel that His shadow yields a great delight, and that His fruit is sweet unto one's taste—this is a way of living which angels might almost envy the favored men who possess it. May the Master call you in that sense now! Pray that prayer which Watts has put into rhyme—

"Draw me away from flesh and sense,
One Sovereign Word shall draw me thence;
I would obey the voice Divine,
And all inferior joys resign."

May you get a call from the Master, "Follow Me unto the Mount of Transfiguration to see My Glory, and share in it, and abide with Me in sacred, rapt, secret fellowship of which the world knows nothing."

But this was not merely a call to fellowship, but to practical fellowship. It seemed to say, "Peter, put down your net, and take up the cross; I am to be despised, come and be despised with Me; I am going outside the camp, I shall be scorned, and cast out from society; come, Peter, come outside the camp with Me." Oh may Christ give you such a call as that! You are saved, but still, to a great extent you are in the world. Oh that you might have a separating call—"Come you out from among them; be you separate; touch not the unclean thing." May you feel now as if you had got a new life over and above the life you have already; that you have fresh blood poured into the veins of your piety, that you might rise to something better. Come out and confess your Master; confess Him by nonconformity to the world in all respects.

To conclude. When Christ said, "Follow Me," did He not mean that Peter was to follow Him in everything and in all things? May the Master call you and me to follow Him in that consecration to His Father's will which made Him say—"My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me." Oh, there are so many of you professors whose meat and drink are found in trade, or the making of money, or the reading of books, or the study of this and of that. May He call you to make Himself the first thing, to make His honor your grand objective, and to make His Church your true mistress, the lady of your heart reigning in your spirit. Oh, to be wholly given up to Christ, to be a sacrifice upon the altar, smoking, burning, utterly consumed, a living sacrifice, which is your most reasonable service. No, you need not shut up your shop; oh no, but you will go and make money for Christ, and give it to His cause. No, you need not give up your daily labor, but you will be a priest unto God even while you are wearing the garments of your trade. No, you must not dare to think of such a thing as withdrawing from your present position, and

your little ones round about you, but you must stay where you are and glorify Christ there, feeling now that you have been called to the work of God, that service is to be done just where you are; you are not to be stargazing and looking aloft for some great thing, but to stand and do a day's work in a day in the sphere where Providence has called you, and where Divine Grace has blessed you.

Now, you see, I have put all this on the right footing. I have told none of you to serve Christ till you are saved, but when you are saved, I hope and pray that you and I may see Christ calling on us to be "fishers of men."

May the Lord call some who have never been called at all. May it come to pass that this very evening some may look to the Lamb of God, dying, bleeding, and suffering. Sinner, He is the Sin-Bearer. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. That face was marred with sorrow, and there must you find your hope. Look to Him. That bleeding Man is also the immortal God; trust Him and you are saved. That one act of trust is the means of Eternal Salvation to everyone who exercises it. Then, being saved, may Christ call you, fishermen or whatever you may be, to serve Him until He comes to take you unto Himself—

"Teach me, my God and King,
In all things You to see,
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for Thee!
All may of You partake—
Nothing so small can be,
But draws when acted for Your sake,
Greatness and worth from Thee.
If done beneath Your laws,
Even servile labors shine!
Hallowed is toil, if this the cause,
The meanest work Divine."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 1:35-51.

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SALVATION ALTOGETHER BY GRACE
NO. 703

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 29, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and Grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began."
2 Timothy 1:9.

IF we would influence thoughtful persons it must be by solid arguments. Shallow minds may be worked upon by mere warmth of emotion and force of excitement, but the more valuable part of the community must be dealt with in quite another manner. When the Apostle Paul was desirous to influence his son in the faith, Timothy, who was a diligent and earnest student and a man of gifts as well as of Divine Grace, he did not attempt to affect him by mere appeals to his feelings, but felt that the most effectual way to act upon him was to remind him of solid Doctrinal Truth of God which he knew Timothy believed. This is a lesson for the ministry at large. Certain earnest preachers are incessantly exciting the people, but seldom if ever instructing them; they carry much fire and very little light. God forbid that we should say a word against appealing to the feelings; this is most necessary in its place, but then there is a due proportion to be observed in it. A religion which is based upon, sustained, and maintained simply by excitement, will necessarily be very flimsy and unsubstantial, and will yield very speedily to the crush of opposition or to the crumbling hand of time. The preacher may touch the feelings by rousing appeals, as the harpist touches the harp strings; he will be very foolish if he should neglect so ready and admirable an instrument; but still as he is dealing with reasonable creatures, he must not forget to enlighten the intellect and instruct the understanding.

And how can he appeal to the understanding better than by presenting to it the Truth which the Holy Spirit teaches? Scriptural Doctrine furnishes us with powerful motives to urge upon the minds of Christians. It seems to me that if we could by some unreasoning impulse move you to a certain course of action it might be well in its way, but it would be unsafe and untrustworthy, for you would be equally open to be moved in an opposite direction by other persons more skilled in such operations; but if God enables us by His Spirit to influence your minds by solid Truth and substantial argument, you will then move with a constancy of power which nothing can turn aside. The feather flies in the wind, but it has no inherent power to move, and consequently when the gale is over it falls to the ground—such is the religion of excitement; but the eagle has life within itself, and its wings bear it aloft and onward whether the breeze favors it or not—such is religion when sustained by a

conviction of the Truth of God. The well-taught man in Christ Jesus stands firm where the uninstructed infant would fall or be carried away. "Be not carried about with every wind of Doctrine," says the Apostle, and those are least likely to be so carried who are well established in the Truth as it is in Jesus.

It is somewhat remarkable—at least it may seem so to persons who are not accustomed to think upon the subject—that the Apostle, in order to excite Timothy to boldness, to keep him constant in the faith, reminds him of the great Doctrine that the Grace of God reigns in the salvation of men. He gives in this verse—this parenthetical verse as some call it, but which seems to me to be fully in the current of the passage—he gives in this verse a brief summary of the Gospel, showing the great prominence which it gives to the Grace of God, with the design of maintaining Timothy in the boldness of his testimony for Christ. I do not doubt but that a far greater power for usefulness lies concealed within the Doctrines of Grace than some men have ever dreamed of. It has been usual to look upon Doctrinal Truth as being nothing more than unpractical theory, and many have spoken of the precepts of God's Word as being more practical and more useful; the day may yet come when in clearer light we shall perceive that sound Doctrine is the very root and vital energy of practical holiness, and that to teach the people the Truth which God has revealed is the readiest and surest way of leading them to obedience and persevering holiness.

May the Holy Spirit assist us while we shall, first, *consider the Doctrine taught by the Apostle in this text;* and secondly, *the uses of that Doctrine.*

I. Very carefully let us CONSIDER THE DOCTRINE TAUGHT BY THE APOSTLE IN THIS TEXT.

Friends will remember that it is not our objective to preach the Doctrine which is most popular or most palatable, nor do we desire to set forth the views of any one person in the assembly; our one aim is to give what we judge to be the meaning of the text. We shall probably deliver Doctrine which many of you will not like, and if you should not like it we shall not be at all surprised, or even if you should be vexed and angry we shall not be at all alarmed, because we never understood that we were commissioned to preach what would please our hearers, nor were expected by sensible, not to say gracious men, to shape our views to suit the notions of our audience. We count ourselves amenable to God and to the text; and if we give the meaning of the text, we believe we shall give the mind of God, and we shall be likely to have His favor which will be sufficient for us, contradict us who may. However, let every candid mind be willing to receive the Truth of God, if it is clearly in the Inspired Word.

1. The Apostle in stating his Doctrine in the following words, "Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and Grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began," *declares God to be the Author of Salvation*—"Who has saved us and called us." The whole tenor of the verse is towards a strong affirmation of Jonah's Doctrine, "that salvation is of the Lord." It would require very great twisting, involving more than

ingenuity, it would need dishonesty, to make out salvation by man out of this text; but to find salvation altogether of God in it is to perceive the Truth of God which lies upon the very surface. No need for profound inquiry, the wayfaring man though a fool shall not err here; for the text says as plainly as words can say, "God has saved us, and called us with a holy calling." The Apostle, then, in order to bring forth the Truth that salvation is of Grace, declares that it is of God, that it springs directly and entirely from Him and from Him alone. Is not this according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit in other places, where He affirms over and over again that the alpha and omega of our salvation must be found, not in ourselves, but in our God? Our Apostle, in saying that God has saved us refers to all the Persons of the Divine Unity. *The Father* has saved us. "God has given to us eternal life" (1 John 5:11). "The Father Himself loves you." It was He whose gracious mind first conceived the thought of redeeming His chosen from the ruin of the Fall; it was His mind which first planned the way of Salvation by Substitution; it was from His generous heart that the thought first sprang that Christ should suffer as the Covenant Head of His people, as said the Apostle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His Grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph 1:3-6).

From the heart of Divine compassion came the gift of the only begotten Son: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Father selected the persons who should receive an interest in the Redemption of His Son, for these are described as, "called according to His purpose" (Rom 8:28). The plan of Salvation in all its details sprang from the Father's Wisdom and Grace. The Apostle did not, however, overlook the work of *the Son.* It is most certainly through the Son of God that we are saved, for is not His name Jesus, the Savior? Incarnate in the flesh, His holy life is the Righteousness in which saints are arrayed; while His ignominious and painful death has filled the sacred bath of blood in which the sinner must be washed that he may be made clean. It is through the Redemption, which is in Christ Jesus, that the people of God become accepted in the Beloved. With one voice before the Eternal Throne they sing, "Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be Glory," and they chant that hymn because He deserves the Glory which they ascribe to Him. It is the Son of God who is the Savior of men, and men are not the saviors of themselves.

Nor did the Apostle, I am persuaded, forget that Third Person in the blessed Unity—*the Holy Spirit.* Who but the Holy Spirit first gives us power to understand the Gospel? "The carnal mind understands not the things that are of God." Does not the Holy Spirit influence our will, turning us from the obstinacy of our former rebellion to the obedience of

the Truth of God? Does not the Holy Spirit renew us, creating us in Christ Jesus unto good works? Is it not by the Holy Spirit's breath that we live in the spiritual life? Is He not to us Instructor, Comforter, Quickener? Is He not everything, in fact, through His active operations upon our mind? The Father, then, in planning, the Son in redeeming, the Spirit, in applying the Redemption must be spoken of as the one God "who has saved us."

Brothers and Sisters, to say that we save ourselves is to utter a manifest absurdity. We are called in Scripture "a temple"—a holy Temple in the Lord. But shall anyone assert that the stones of the edifice were their own architect? Shall it be said that the stones of the building in which we are now assembled cut themselves into their present shape, and then spontaneously came together, and piled this spacious edifice? Should anyone assert such a foolish thing, we would be disposed to doubt his sanity; much more may we suspect the spiritual sanity of any man who should venture to affirm that the great Temple of the Church of God designed and erected itself. No—we believe that God the Father was the Architect, sketched the plan, supplies the materials, and will complete the work. Shall it also be said that those who are redeemed redeemed themselves? That slaves of Satan break their own fetters? Then why was a Redeemer needed at all? How should there be any need for Jesus to descend into the world to redeem those who could redeem themselves? Do you believe that the sheep of God, whom He has taken from between the jaws of the lion, could have rescued themselves? It were a strange thing if such were the case. Our Lord Jesus came not to do an impossible work, but if He came to save persons who might have saved themselves, He certainly came without a necessity for so doing. We cannot believe that Christ came to do what the sinners might have done themselves. No, "He has trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him," and the Redemption of His people shall give Glory unto Himself only!

Shall it be asserted that those who were once dead have spiritually quickened themselves? Can the dead make themselves alive? Who shall assert that Lazarus, rotting in the grave, came forth to life of himself? If it is so said and so believed, then, no, not even then, will we believe that the dead in sin have ever quickened themselves. Those who are saved by God the Holy Spirit are created anew according to Scripture; but whoever dreamed of Creation creating itself? God spoke the world out of nothing, but nothing did not aid in the creation of the universe! Divine Energy can do everything, but what can nothing do? Now if we have a new Creation, there must have been a Creator, and it is clear that not being then spiritually created, we could not have assisted in our own new Creation, unless, indeed, death can assist life, and non-existence aid in Creation. The carnal mind does not assist the Spirit of God in new creating a man, but altogether Regeneration is the work of God the Holy Spirit, and the work of renewal is from His unassisted power. Father, Son and Spirit we then adore, and putting these thoughts together, we would humbly prostrate ourselves at the foot of the Throne of the august Majesty, and

acknowledge that if saved, He alone has saved us, and unto Him be the Glory.

2. We next remark that Divine Grace is in this verse rendered conspicuous when we see that *God pursues a singular method,* "Who has saved us and called us." The peculiarity of the manner lies in three things—first, in the *completeness* of it. The Apostle uses the perfect tense and says, "who *has* saved us." Believers in Christ Jesus *are* saved. They are not looked upon as persons who are in a hopeful state and may ultimately *be* saved, but they *are* already saved. This is not according to the common talk of professors nowadays, for many of them speak of being saved when they come to die; but it is according to the usage of Scripture to speak of us who *are* saved. Be it known this morning that every man and woman here is either saved at this present moment, or lost, and that Salvation is not a blessing to be enjoyed upon the dying bed and to be sung of in a future state, but a matter to be obtained, received, promised and enjoyed now. God has saved His saints, mark, not partly saved them, but perfectly saved them. The Christian is perfectly saved in *God's Purpose;* God has ordained him unto Salvation, and that Purpose is complete. He is saved, also, as *to the price which has been paid for him;* for this is done not in part but in whole. The Substitutionary work which Christ has offered is not a certain proportion of the work to be done, but "it is finished" was the cry of the Savior before He died. The Believer is also perfectly saved *in his Covenant Head,* for as we were utterly lost as soon as ever Adam fell, before we had committed any actual sin, so every man in Christ was saved in the Second Adam when He finished His work. The Savior completed His work, and in the sense in which Paul uses that expression, "He has saved us."

This completeness is one peculiarity—we must mark another. I want you to notice the *order* as well as the completeness; "who has saved us and called us." What? Saved us before He called us? Yes, so the text says. But is a man saved before he is called by Divine Grace? Not in his own experience, not as far as the work of the Holy Spirit goes, but he is saved in God's Purpose, in Christ's Redemption, and in his relationship to his Covenant Head; and he is saved, moreover, in this respect, that the work of his Salvation is done, and he has only to receive it as a finished work. In the olden times of imprisonment for debt, it would have been quite correct for you to step into the cell of a debtor and say to him, "I have freed you," if you had paid his debts and obtained an order for his discharge. Well, but he is still in prison. Yes, but you really liberated him as soon as you paid his debts. It is true he was still in prison, but he was not legally there, and no sooner did he know that the debt was paid, and that receipt was pleaded before proper authorities, than the man obtained his liberty. So the Lord Jesus Christ paid the debts of His people before they knew anything about it. Did He not pay them on the Cross more than 1,800 years ago to the utmost penny? And is not this the reason why, as soon as He meets with us in a way of Grace, He cries, "I have saved you; lay hold on Eternal Life"? We are, then, virtually,

though not actually, saved before we are called. "He has saved us and called us." There is yet a third peculiarity, and that is in connection with the calling. God has called us with a *holy calling*. Those whom the Savior saved upon the tree are in due time effectually called by the Power of God the Holy Spirit unto holiness; they leave their sins, they endeavor to be like Christ, they choose holiness, not out of any compulsion, but from the stress of a new Nature, which leads them to rejoice in holiness, just as naturally as before they delighted in sin. Whereas their old nature loved everything that was evil, their new Nature cannot sin because it is born of God, and it loves everything that is good.

Does not the Apostle mention this result of our calling in order to meet those who say that God calls His people because He foresees their holiness? Not so; He calls them to that holiness; that holiness is not a cause but an effect; it is not the motive of His Purpose, but the result of His Purpose. He neither chose them nor called them because they were holy, but He called them that they might be holy, and holiness is the beauty produced by His workmanship in them. The excellence which we see in a Believer is as much the work of God as the Atonement itself. This second point brings out very sweetly the fullness of the Grace of God. First—Salvation must be of Grace, because the Lord is the Author of it, and what motive but Grace could move Him to save the guilty? In the next place, Salvation must be of Grace because the Lord works in such a manner that our righteousness is forever excluded. Salvation is completed by God, and therefore not of man, neither by man; Salvation is worked by God in an order which puts our holiness as a consequence and not as a cause, and therefore merit is forever disowned.

3. When a speaker desires to strengthen his point and to make himself clear, he generally puts in a negative as to the other side. So the Apostle adds a negative— "Not according to our works." The world's great preaching is, "Do as well as you can, live a moral life, and God will save you." The *Gospel* preaching is this—"You are a lost sinner, and you can deserve nothing of God but His displeasure; if you are to be saved, it must be by an act of Sovereign Grace. God must freely extend the silver scepter of His Love to you, for you are a guilty wretch who deserves to be sent to the lowest Hell. Your best works are so full of sin that they can in no degree save you—to the free Mercy of God you must owe all things." "Oh," says one, "are good works of no use?" Good works are of use when a man is saved, they are the evidences of his being saved; but good works do not save a man, good works do not influence the mind of God to save a man, for if so, Salvation would be a matter of debt and not of Grace. The Lord has declared over and over in His Word, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified." The Apostle in the Epistle to the Galatians is very strong indeed upon this point; indeed he thunders it out again, and again, and again. He denies that Salvation is even so much as in part due to our works, for if it is by works, then he declares it is not of Grace, otherwise Grace is no more Grace; and if it is of Grace, it is not of works, otherwise work is no more work. Paul assures us that the two principles of Grace

and merit can no more mix together than fire and water; that if man is to be saved by the Mercy of God, it must be by the Mercy of God and not by works; but if man is to be saved by works, it must be by works entirely and not by Mercy mixed with it, for Mercy and work will not go together. Jesus saves, but He does all the work or none. He is Author and Finisher, and works must not rob Him of His due.

Sinner, you must either receive Salvation freely from the hand of Divine Bounty, or else you must earn it by your own unassisted merits, which is utterly impossible. Oh that you would yield to the first! My Brothers and Sisters, this is the Truth of God which still needs to be preached. This is the Truth of God which shook all Europe from end to end when Luther first proclaimed it. Is not this the old thunderbolt which the great Reformer hurled at Rome—"Justified freely by His Grace, through the Redemption which is in Christ Jesus"? But why did God make Salvation to be by faith? Scripture tells us—"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by Grace." If it had been by works it must have been by debt; but since it is by faith, we can clearly see that there can be no merit in faith. It must be therefore by Divine Grace.

4. My text is even more explicit, yet *for the Eternal Purpose is mentioned.* The next thing the Apostle says is this: "Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own Purpose." Mark that phrase—"according to His own Purpose." Oh how some people wriggle over that phrase, as if they were worms on a fisherman's hook! But there it stands, and cannot be gotten rid of. God saves His people "according to His *Purpose*," no, "according to His *own purpose."* My Brothers and Sisters, do you not see how all the merit and the power of the creature are shut out here, when you are saved, not according to your purpose or merit, but "according to *His* own purpose"? I shall not dwell on this; it is not exactly the objective of this morning's discourse to bring out in full the great mystery of *Electing Love*, but I will not, for a moment, keep back the Truth of God. If any man is saved, it is not because he purposed to be saved, but because God purposed to save him. Have you never read the Holy Spirit's testimony—"It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy"? The Savior said to His Apostles what He in effect says also to us, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you might bring forth fruit." Some hold one and some another view concerning the freedom of the will, but our Savior's Doctrine is, "You will *not* come unto Me that you might have life." You will not come; your wills will never bring you; if you do come, it is because Divine Grace inclined you! "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw Him." "Whoever comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," is a great and precious general text, but it is quite consistent with the rest of the same verse—"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." Our text tells us that our Salvation is "according to His own purpose." It is a strange thing that men should be so angry against the Purpose of God. We ourselves have a purpose; we permit our fellow creatures to have some will of their own, and especially in giving

away their own goods; but is my God to be bound and fettered by men, and not permitted to do as He wills with His own? But be this known unto you, O men who reply against God, that He gives no account of His actions, but asks of you, "Can I not do as I will with My own?" He rules in Heaven, and in the armies of this lower world, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, "What are You doing?"

5. But then the text, lest we should make any mistake, adds, "according to His own purpose and grace." *The Purpose is not founded on foreseen merit, but upon Divine Grace alone.* It is Grace, all Grace, nothing but Grace from first to last. Man stands shivering outside, a condemned criminal, and God, sitting upon His Throne, sends the herald to tell him that He is willing to receive sinners and to pardon them. The sinner replies, "Well, I am willing to be pardoned if I am permitted to do something in order to earn pardon. If I can stand before the King and claim that I have done something to win His favor, I am quite willing to come." But the herald replies, "No, if you are pardoned, you must understand it is entirely and wholly as an act of Grace on God's part. He sees nothing good in you, He knows that there is nothing good in you; He is willing to take you just as you are, filthy, and bad, and wicked, and undeserving; He is willing to give you graciously what He would not sell to you, and what He knows you cannot earn of Him. Will you have it?" And naturally every man says, "No, I will not be saved in that style." Well, then, Soul, remember that you will never be saved at all, for God's way is Salvation by Grace; you will have to confess, if ever you are saved, my dear Hearer, that you never deserved one single blessing from the God of Grace; you will have to give all the Glory to His holy name if ever you get to Heaven. And mark you, even in the matter of the acceptance of this offered mercy, you will never accept it unless He makes you willing. He does freely present it to every one of you, and He honestly bids you come to Christ and live; but come you never will, I know, except the effectual Grace which first provided Mercy shall make you willing to accept that mercy. So the text tells us it is His own Purpose and Grace.

6. Again, in order to shut out everything like boasting, *the whole is spoken of as a gift.* Notice that—lest, (for we are such straying sheep in this matter), lest we should still slip out of the field, it is added, "purpose and grace which He *gave* us"—not "which He sold us," "offered us," but "which He gave us." He must have a word here which shall be a death-blow to all merit—"which he gave us"—it was given; and what can be freer than a gift, and what more evidently of Divine Grace?

7. *But the gift is bestowed through a medium which glorifies Christ.* It is written, "which was given us *in* Christ Jesus." We ask to have Mercy from the wellhead of Divine Grace, but we ask not even to make the bucket in which it is to be brought to us; Christ is to be the Sacred Vessel in which the Grace of God is to be presented to our thirsty lips. Now where is boasting? Why surely there it sits at the foot of the Cross and sings, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Is it not Grace and Grace alone?

8. Yet further, a period is mentioned and added—*"before the world began."* Those last words seem to me forever to lay prostrate all idea of anything of our own merits in saving ourselves, because it is here witnessed that God gave us Divine Grace "before the world began." Where were you then? What hand had you in it "before the world began"? Why, fly back, if you can, in imagination, to the ancient years when those venerable mountains, that elder birth of Nature, were not yet formed; fly back when world, and sun, and moon, and stars, were all in embryo in God's great mind; when the unnavigated sea of space had never been disturbed by wing of seraph, and the awful silence of Eternity had never been startled by the song of cherubim—when God dwelt alone. If you can conceive that time before all time, that vast Eternity—it was then He gave us Grace in Christ Jesus. What, O Soul, had you to do with that? Where were your merits then? Where were you yourself? O you small dust of the balance, you insect of a day, where were you? See how Jehovah reigned, dispensing Mercy as He would, and ordaining unto Eternal Life without taking counsel of man or angel, for neither man or angel then had an existence. That it might be all of Grace He gave us Grace before the world began.

I have honestly read out the Doctrine of the text, and nothing more. If such is not the meaning of the text I do not know the meaning of it, and I cannot therefore tell you what it is, but I believe that I have given the natural and grammatical teaching of the text. If you do not like the Doctrine, I cannot help it. I did not make the text, and if I have to expound it I must expound it honestly as it is in my Master's Word, and I pray you receive what *He* says, whatever you may do with what I say.

II. I shall need your patience while I try to SHOW THE USES OF THIS DOCTRINE.

The Doctrine of Grace has been put by in the lumber chamber. It is acknowledged to be true, for it is confessed in most creeds; it is in the Church of England articles, it is in the confessions of all sorts of Protestant Christians, except those who are avowedly Arminian, but how little is it ever preached! It is put among the relics of the past. It is considered to be a respectable sort of retired officer, who is not expected to see any more active service. Now I believe that it is not a retired officer in the Master's army, but that it is as full of force and vigor as ever. But what is the use of it? Why, first then, it is clear from the context that it has a tendency to embolden the man who receives it. Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed, and he gives this as a motive—How can a man be ashamed when he believes that God has given him Grace in Christ Jesus before the world was? Suppose the man to be very poor. "Oh," he says, "what does it matter? Though I have but a little oil in the cruse, and a little meal in the barrel, yet I have a lot and a portion in everlasting things! My name is not in Doomsday Book nor in Burke's Peerage; but it is in the Book of God's Election, and was there before the world began!" Such a man dares look the proudest of his fellows in the face. This was the Doctrine on which the brave old Ironsides fed; the men who, when they rode to battle with the war cry of, "The Lord of Hosts!" made the

cavaliers fly before them like chaff before the wind. No Doctrine like it for putting a backbone into a man, and making him feel that he is made for something better than to be trod down like straw for the dunghill beneath a despot's heel. Sneer who will, the Elect of God derive a nobility from the Divine Choice which no royal patent can outshine.

I would that Free Grace were more preached, because *it gives men something to believe with confidence.* The great mass of professing Christians know nothing of Doctrine; their religion consists in going a certain number of times to a place of worship, but they have no care for the Truth of God one way or another. I speak without any prejudice in this matter; but I have talked with a large number of persons in the course of my very extensive pastorate who have been for years members of other churches, and when I have asked them a few questions upon Doctrinal matters it did not seem to me that they thought they were in error—they were perfectly willing to believe almost anything that any earnest man might teach them, but they did not know anything, they had no minds of their own, and no definite opinions. Our children, who have learned *The Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith,* know more about the Doctrines of Grace and the Doctrine of the Bible than hundreds of grownups who attend a ministry which very eloquently teaches nothing. It was observed by a very excellent critic not long ago that if you were to hear 13 lectures on astronomy or geology, you might get a pretty good idea of what the science was, and the theory of the person who gave the lectures; but that if you were to hear 1,300 sermons from some ministers, you would not know at all what they were preaching about or what their Doctrinal sentiments were. It ought not to be so. Is not this the reason why Puseyism spreads so, and all sorts of errors have such a foothold, because our people, as a whole do not know what they believe? The Doctrine of Election, if well received, gives to a man something which he knows and which he holds and which will become dear to him—for which he would be prepared to die if the fires of persecution were again kindled.

Better still is it that this Doctrine not only gives the man something to hold but *it holds the man.* Let a man once have burnt into him that Salvation is of God and not of man, and that God's Grace is to be glorified and not human merit, and you will never get that belief out of him; it is the rarest thing in all the world to hear of such a man ever apostatizing from his faith. Other Doctrine is slippery ground, like the slope of a mountain composed of loose earth and rolling stones, down which the traveler may slide long before he can even get a transient foothold; but this is like a granite step upon the eternal pyramid of Truth; get your feet on this, and there is no fear of slipping so far as Doctrinal standing is concerned. If we would have our churches in England well instructed and holding fast the Truth of God, we must bring out the grand old verity of the Eternal Purpose of God in Christ Jesus before the world began. Oh may the Holy Spirit write it on our hearts!

Moreover, my Brothers and Sisters, this Doctrine overwhelms as with an avalanche all the claims of priest-craft. Let it be told to men that they are saved by God, and they say at once, "Then what is the use of the priest?" If they are told it is God's Grace, then they ask, "Then you do not need our money to buy masses and absolutions?" And down goes the priest at once. Beloved, this is the battering ram that God uses with which to shake the gates of Hell. How much more forcible than the pretty essays of many so-called Divines which have no more power than bulrushes, no more light than smoking flax. What do you suppose people used to meet in the woods for in persecuting times? They met by thousands outside the town of Antwerp, and such-like places on the Continent, in jeopardy of their lives! Do you suppose they would ever have come together to hear that poor milk-and-water theology of this age, or to receive the lukewarm milk and water of our modern anti-Calvinists? Not they, my Brothers and Sisters. They needed stronger meat, and a more savory diet to attract them. Do you imagine that when it was death to listen to the preacher, that men under the shadows of night, and amid the wings of tempest would then listen to philosophical essays, or to mere moral precepts, or to diluted, adulterated, soulless, theological suppositions? No, there is no energy in that kind of thing to draw men together under fear of their lives. So what did bring them together in the dead of night amidst the glare of lightning, and the roll of thunder—what brought them together? Why, the Doctrine of the Grace of God, the Doctrine of Jesus, and of His servants Paul, and Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin; for there is something in that Doctrine which touches the heart of the Christian, and gives him food such as his soul loves, savory meat, suitable to his Heaven-born appetite! To hear this men braved death, and defied the sword. And if we are to see once again the scarlet hat plucked from the wearer's head, and the shaven crowns with all the gaudy trumpery of Rome sent back to the place from where they came—and Heaven grant that they may take our Puseyite Established Church with them—it must be by declaring all the Doctrines of the Grace of God. When these are declared and vindicated in every place, we shall yet again make these enemies of God and man to know that they cannot stand their ground for a moment where men of God wield the sword of the Lord and of Gideon by preaching the Doctrines of the Grace of God.

Brothers and Sisters, let the man receive these Truths; let them be written in his heart by the Holy Spirit, and they will make him *look up.* He will say, "God has saved me!" and he will walk with a constant eye to God. He will not forget to see the hand of God in Nature and in Providence; he will, on the contrary, discern the Lord working in all places, and will humbly adore Him. He will not give to laws of Nature or schemes of State the Glory due to the Most High, but will have respect unto the unseen Ruler. "What the Lord says to me, that will I do," is the Believer's language. "What is His will that will I follow; what is His Word, that will I believe; what is His promise, on that I will live." It is a blessed habit to teach a man to look up, look up to God in all things.

At the same time, this Doctrine of Election makes a man look down upon himself. "Ah," he says, "I am nothing, there is nothing in me to merit esteem. I have no goodness of my own. If saved, I cannot praise myself; I cannot in any way ascribe to myself honor; God has done it, God has done it." Nothing makes the man so humble; but nothing makes him so glad; nothing lays him so low at the Mercy Seat, but nothing makes him so brave to look his fellow man in the face. It is a grand Truth of God—would to God you all knew its mighty Power!

Lastly, this precious Truth is full of comfort to the sinner, and that is why I love it. As it has been preached by some it has been exaggerated and made into a bugbear. Why, there are some who preach the Doctrine of Election as though it were a line of sharp spikes to keep a sinner from coming to Christ, as though it were a sharp, glittering sword to be pushed into the breast of a coming sinner to keep him from Divine Mercy! Now it is not so. Sinner, whoever you may be, wherever you may be, your greatest comfort should be to know that Salvation is by Divine Grace. Why Man, if it were by merit, what would become of you? Suppose that God saved men on account of their merits, where would you drunkards be? Where would you swearers be? You who have been unclean and unchaste, and you whose hearts have cursed God, and who even now do not love Him—where would you be? But when it is all of Grace, why, then, all your past life, however black and filthy it may be, need not keep you from coming to Jesus. Christ receives sinners; God has elected sinners; He has elected some of the filthiest of sinners—why not you? He receives every one that comes to Him. He will not cast you out. There have been some who have hated Him, insulted Him to His face, that have burned His servants alive, and have persecuted Him in His members, but as soon as they have cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," He has given them Mercy at once, and He will give it to you if you are led to seek it. If I had to tell you that you were to work out your own salvation apart from His Grace it were a sad day for you, but when it comes to you thus: Filthy? There is washing for you! Dead in sins? There is life for you! Naked? There is raiment for you! All undone and ruined? Here is a complete Salvation for you!

O Soul, may you have Grace to lay hold of it, and then you and I together will sing to the praise of the Glory of Divine Grace.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Timothy 1.

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HEZEKIAH AND THE AMBASSADORS—OR, VAINGLORY REBUKED
NO. 704

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 5, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"At that time Berodach-Baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick. And Hezekiah was attentive to them, and showed them all the house of his treasures—the silver and gold, and the spices and precious ointment, and all his armory—all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them."
2 Kings 20:12, 13.

AND what of that? Was it not the most natural thing in all the world to do? Who among us would not have shown the strangers over our house, and our garden, and our library, and have pointed out to them any little treasures and curiosities which we might happen to possess? And what if Hezekiah was somewhat proud of his wealth? Was it not a most natural pride that he who was a monarch of so small a territory should nevertheless be able, by economy and good government, to accumulate so large and varied a treasure? Did it not show that he was prudent and thrifty; and might he not commend himself as an example to the Babylonian ambassadors, by showing what these virtues had done for him? Exactly so; this is just as man sees; but God sees after another sort: "Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart." Things are not to God as they seem to us. Actions which apparently and upon the surface, and even so far as human judgment can go, may appear to be either indifferent or even laudable, may seem to God to be so hateful that His anger may burn against them. We look upon a needle, and to our naked eye it is as smooth as glass, but when we put it under the microscope it appears at once to be as rough as a raw bar of iron. It is much after this manner with our actions. They may seem in our own judgments, and in the judgments of our fellow creatures, to be as bright and smooth as the needle for their excellence, but when they come under the inspection of the All-Seeing God, they are full of all manner of roughnesses of sin. Our lilies may be the Lord's nettles, and our gardens nothing better than a wilderness in His sight.

Yet another reflection which strikes one at the very first blush of this affair, namely, that God has a different rule for judging His children's doings from that which He applies to the actions of strangers. I can believe that if Hezekiah had sent *his* ambassadors to Berodach-Baladan, that heathen monarch might have shown the Jewish ambassadors over all his treasures without any sort of sin; God would not have been provoked to anger, nor would a Prophet have uttered so much as a word of remonstrance or of threat—but Hezekiah is not like Berodach-

Baladan, he must not do as the Babylonians may do. Baladan is but a serf in God's Kingdom, and Hezekiah is a prince; the one is an alien, and the other is a dear and much-cherished child. We have all different modes of dealing with men according to their relation to us. If a stranger should speak against you in the street you would not feel it, you would scarcely be angry even though the statement might be libelous; but if it were the wife of your bosom it would sting you to the heart, or if your child should slander you it would cut you to the quick. When we admit persons into intimacy and reveal our hearts to them, we expect them to act toward us with a tenderness and a delicacy which it were utterly unreasonable to expect in strangers, and we judge their actions by a peculiar standard; we weigh as it were, the actions of ordinary men in the common rough scales which would not turn with an ounce or even a pound, but the doings of our friends we weigh in such sensitive balances that even though it were but a feather from the wing of a fly the scale would turn.

It is a solemn thing to be a favorite of Heaven, for where another man may sin with impunity, the Beloved of God will not offend without grievous chastisement. If you lie in the bosom of Heaven, you must take care that your soul is chaste towards God; if you are favored with the secret of the Most High you must peculiarly be among them who fear Him; for if not, He will say unto you as He said to His favored Israel—"You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." It might be treason in a courtier to speak of the king as a stranger might safely do; and he who is admitted into the cabinet must not only be beyond fault in his loyalty, but even beyond suspicion.

We remark, then, that the act of Hezekiah here recorded is not upon the surface a sinful one, but that the sin is to be found, not so much in the action itself as in his motives of which *we* cannot be judges, but which God very accurately judged, and very strictly condemned; and again, we remark that this sin of Hezekiah might not have been sin in others at all, that even with the same motive, if done by others, it might not have so provoked God; but seeing that Hezekiah, above even most of the Scriptural saints, was favored with singular interpositions of Providence, and distinguished honors from God's hand, he should have been more careful. His sin, if little in others, became great in him, because of his being so beloved of God. A man with a worn and stained garment may walk without spoiling his robe where another clothed in white might not venture; a spot might not show upon a filthy garment, but the cleaner the robe, the more readily is the spot discovered, and from the very fact that Hezekiah was so superlatively a holy man, and a man favored of God, his sin showed itself, and God visited it at once with chastisement.

I. In order to bring out what Hezekiah's offense was, it will be best for me to begin by describing his CIRCUMSTANCES AND STATE AT THE TIME OF THE TRANSACTION.

We shall need a rather lengthy description; and, in the first place, we may remark that *he had received very singular favors.* Sennacherib had invaded the land with a host reckoned to be invincible, and probably it

was invincible by all the known means of warfare of that age. He had ravaged every State and taken away innumerable prisoners, besides despoiling every city to which he laid siege; but when he came near Jerusalem he was not able even so much as to cast a mound against it, or to shoot an arrow at it, for God singularly interposed, and the host of Sennacherib, struck by the sudden breath of pestilence, or by the deadly air of the desert wind, fell dead upon the plain. This was a memorable deliverance from a foe so gigantic as to be compared to leviathan, into whose jaw the Lord thrust a hook, and led him back to the place from where he came. Beside this, Hezekiah had been restored from a sickness pronounced to be mortal. He had been granted a singular escape from the gates of death; where another man must have died, he was enabled within three days to go up to the House of the Lord. Added to all this, in connection with his recovery, God had seen fit to do for him what He had only done for Joshua before, namely, to interrupt the order of the heavens, and to make the sun go back ten degrees upon the dial of Ahaz as a token by which His servant's faith might be comforted. This was no mean thing when death from below and Heaven from above were both stayed in their courses for the favored child of Heaven, when the shades of the grave and the brightness of the sun alike were moved for him to prove the loving kindness of the Lord.

In addition to all this the Lord gave Hezekiah an unusual run of prosperity. Everything prospered. If you read the statement given in the Chronicles, and also that in Isaiah, you will find that he was enriched both by presents from the neighboring kings, who were probably overawed by the fact that Sennacherib had been destroyed in the country of Hezekiah, and he was probably also enriched by trading as Solomon had done before him. Hezekiah, though but a little prince, suddenly found himself a wealthy man, having moreover one thing in his treasury which could not have been discovered among the riches of any other living man, namely, a writ from the Court of Heaven, that he should live 15 years. What would not some monarchs have given, if they had been sure that their lives would have been preserved from daily jeopardy during that length of time? No weight of coral or of pearl would have been considered too great a price for such a gift. Hezekiah was in all respects a prosperous monarch; the man whom the King of kings delighted to honor. This great prosperity was a great temptation, far more difficult to endure than Rabshakeh's letter, and all the ills which invasion brought upon the land. Ah Friend, that is a much-needed prayer: "In all times of our wealth, good Lord deliver us." Many serpents lurk among the flowers of prosperity; high places are dangerous places; it is not easy to carry a full cup with a steady hand; a loaded wagon needs a strong axle, and a well-fed steed requires a tight rein.

We must not forget that Hezekiah, at this time, *had become singularly conspicuous.* To be favored as he was might have been endurable, if he could have lived in retirement; but he was set as upon a pinnacle since all the nations round about must have heard of the destruction of Sennacherib's host. Sennacherib was the common foe of all the smaller potentates, and even the great kings, like the king of Egypt, stood in mortal dread of the power of Assyria; it was therefore sure to be known

far and wide that the tyrant's wings had been clipped in the land of Judah. The going back of the sun must also have struck all nations with astonishment. It appears that the Babylonian ambassadors came to inquire about this wonder, for they were a people much given to observe the heavenly bodies. The world's mouth was full of Hezekiah. Everybody heard of him. Everybody spoke of him. His cure, his victory, and his wealth were common talk in every place where men met together. What a temptation is this! When many eyes are upon one, they may, unless Divine Grace prevents, act like the eyes of the fabled Basilisk, which fascinated their prey. To walk before the Lord in the land of the living is happy and safe walking; but to walk before men is full of peril. To be saluted with applause, to bask in popularity is always dangerous. A full sail needs much ballast, or the vessel will be overturned. Much Grace was needed in the case before us, but this the king did not seek as he should have done.

Hezekiah had remarkable opportunities for usefulness. How much he might have done to honor the God of Israel! I scarcely know of a man, except he were an Inspired Prophet, who had so noble an opportunity of declaring the greatness and goodness of the Lord; for while everybody spoke of him, it was in connection with two wonders which God had worked, which should have brought to the Great Wonder-Working Jehovah a revenue of praise. Why, Hezekiah, had you been in your right senses, and had Divine Grace kept your wits about you, what a sermon you might have preached with death beneath you and Heaven above you for the text, and the Eternal Power and Godhead for the theme! Brothers and Sisters, he ought to have made the courts of princes ring with the name of Jehovah. He should have placed himself in the rear of the picture and have filled the earth with his testimony to the glory of his God. How well he might have exclaimed in the language of triumphant exultation, "Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? Which of these delivered the nations from Sennacherib? Which of these could raise up their votaries from mortal sickness? Which of these could say to the sun's shadow, 'Go back upon the dial of Ahaz'? But Jehovah rules over all! He is King in Heaven above and in the earth beneath." My Brothers and Sisters, it seems to me that if like Moses he had composed some triumphal ode; if he had made the people sing, and bid the women dance like Miriam, while the exultant shout went up to Heaven, "Oh, come let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!" it had been far better work for him than to have been showing these ambassadors his treasury, and exalting his own name among men.

He, above all men, *was under obligation to have loved his God, and to have devoted himself wholly to Him.* All life is sacred to the Giver of Life, and should be devoted to Him; but life supernaturally prolonged, should have been in a special manner dedicated to God. Why should Hezekiah boast of himself? He whose breath has been given back into his nostrils by miracle must not spend it in magnifying himself. Unto God be the glory of our life though it is but given to us once; but oh, with what emphasis should God have all the glory of it if it is given to us twice! But it is written of Hezekiah in the Chronicles, that "he rendered not again

according to the benefit done unto him for *his heart was lifted up."* He enjoyed the blessings, but bowed not before the Giver; he remembered the fruit, but he forgot the tree; he drank of the stream, but did not enough regard the fountain; his fields were watered with dew, but he was not sufficiently grateful to the Heaven from which the dew distils. He stole the fuel from the Altar of Love, and burned it upon the hearth of Pride.

But, my Brothers and Sisters, we must not too hastily condemn Hezekiah! It is for God to condemn but not for us, for I am persuaded had we been in Hezekiah's place we should have done the same. Observe now where his loftiness would find food. Here he might have said to himself, "Within my dominions the greatest of armies has been destroyed, and the mightiest of princes has been humbled. He whose name was a sound of terror in every land came into my country, and he melted away like the snow before the sun. Great are you, O Hezekiah! Great is your land, for your land has devoured Sennacherib, and put an end to the havoc of the destroyer." Remember also that he had this to try him above everything else—he had the certainty of living 15 years. I have already given you a hint of the danger of such certainty. Mortals as we are, in danger of dying at any moment, yet we grow secure; but give us 15 years certain, and I know not that Heaven above would be high enough for our heads, or whether the whole world would be large enough to contain the swellings of our pride. We would be sure to grow vain-gloriously great if the check of constant mortality were removed. The king might in his self-complacent moments have said to himself, "Not only am I thus immortal for 15 years, but the very heavens have been disturbed for me. See what a favorite of Heaven I am!" He did not say with David, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and stars which You have ordained, what is man, that You are mindful of him?" But he heard a Satanic whisper in his soul, "How great are you that even the sun itself, light of the day, and eye of Heaven, must go back to do you pleasure!" Besides, it is not so easy to have life spared, and yet to feel that we ourselves personally are of little consequence. What are any of us to God? He could do without us all. The greatest men in the world, if they were wiped out of creation, would involve no more loss to God than the loss of a fly to the owner of empires; and yet, if life is spared, we are very apt to suppose that we are necessary at least to the Church if not to the Divine Purposes themselves!

Then when Hezekiah surveyed his stores, he would see much to puff him up, for worldly possessions are to men what gas is to a balloon. Ah, my dear Friends, those who know anything about possessions, about broad acres, gold and silver, and works of art, and precious things, and so on, know what a tendency there is to puff up the owners of them. Hezekiah must have felt, as he walked through his armory, and his granaries, and his treasury, "I am a great man." Then all the ambassadors came in from the different countries, and cringing at his feet paid him reverence because of his present fortune. It was too much for his poor head to stand, and as the heart was getting away from God, it is little wonder if vainglory took possession of Hezekiah's mind.

To complete our description of the circumstances, it appears that *at this time God left His servant in a measure, to try him.* "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that He might know all that was in his heart." It seems that through his being lifted up, the Grace of God was, for a time, in its more active operations withdrawn; not that God left him in such a sense as that he ceased to be a saved soul, but he was left in a measure to try him, to let him see what he was. He was getting so great, priding himself so much upon the favor of God, that self-righteousness probably had crept in, and he began to say to himself, "I am not as other men are. Surely I have walked before the Lord with a perfect heart." Some degree of self-righteousness is we think manifest in his prayer when he turned his face to the wall. He was diseased, we fear at that time, with two diseases, not merely a swelling boil, but a swelling self-conceit, and God left him to let him see that he was a poor silly sinner after all. Here, dear Friends, is quite enough to account for his folly, for if the Grace of God should leave the best of us, only the all-knowing God could foretell what we would do. You who are warmest for Christ would become like Laodicea for lukewarmness; you who are sound in the faith would become rotten with error; you who now walk before the Lord in excellency and integrity would be so weak that the first temptation would remove you from your steadfastness. It would be said of us as it was said of that once bright, but now fallen star, "How are you fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning." Bright as we are when Divine Grace shines on us, we are nothing but darkness itself when the Lord withdraws Himself. It was said by the old makers of metaphors that in the soundest pomegranate there are always some rotten seeds, and the whitest swan has a black bill; to which we may add that there are worms under the greenest turf, and dead men's carcasses at the bottom of the calmest seas. In the best Christian there is enough of sin to make him the worst of transgressors if God should leave him. One who knew himself but little wrote that he was so full of Christ that there was no room for the devil, but I thought I saw the cloven foot peeping out even in that boastful speech.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope we may not need to be taught our own emptiness in the same way as Hezekiah learned it. I would willingly know Doctrinally that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing; and I would know it, too, by the teaching of God the Holy Spirit; but I pray for you and for myself, my Brothers and Sisters, that we may never know our depravity experimentally by being left to see it work itself out. Perhaps there may be no way of teaching us so thoroughly the baseness of our heart as by leaving us to its devices; perhaps we shall never know our folly unless allowed to play the fool, but oh prevent it, Lord! Prevent it by Your Grace! Better to be taught by suffering than to be taught by sin! Better to be in God's dungeon than to revel in the devil's palace!

You now see the circumstances clearly. Here is a prosperous man in a proud state of heart, with Divine Grace at a low ebb in his spirit; he is now ready to be the prey of temptation.

II. We must now turn to consider THE OCCURRENCE ITSELF AND THE SIN WHICH AROSE OUT OF IT.

Babylon, a province of Assyria, had thrown off the Assyrian yoke, and Berodach-Baladan was naturally anxious to obtain allies in order that his little kingdom might grow strong enough to preserve itself from the Assyrians. He had seen with great pleasure that the Assyrian army had been destroyed in Hezekiah's country, and very probably not recognizing the miracle, he thought that Hezekiah had defeated the host, and so he sent his ambassadors with a view to make a treaty of alliance with so great a prince. The ambassadors arrived. Now in this case the duty of Hezekiah was very clear. He ought to have received the ambassadors with due courtesy as becomes their office, and he should have regarded their coming as an opportunity to bear testimony to the idolatrous Babylonians of the true God of Israel. He should have explained to them that the wonders which had been worked were worked by the only Living and True God, and then he might have said, in answer to Isaiah's question, "What have they seen in your house?" "I have told them of the mighty acts of Jehovah, I have published abroad His great fame, and I have sent them back to their country to tell abroad that the Lord God Omnipotent reigns." He should have been very cautious with these men. They were idolaters, and therefore not fit company for the worshippers of Jehovah. When they came to him he should have felt, "I am in danger here," as we should do if we wandered among men stricken with plague.

He should, moreover, have taken care to make no boast about his own power, since it is clear that the wonders which had been worked were not to his honor, but to the Glory of the Lord alone. *He* had not slain the host, *he* had not made the sun go back, he had not by his skill restored himself from sickness; it was unto God and to God alone that he ought to have ascribed all the honor. He should not have been vain of his riches, for this led him to show those thievish gentry where there was ample plunder to reward their exertions. His course of action was clear enough. He should have told them of Jehovah, should have proclaimed to them the true God, have treated them with courtesy, and then dismissed them, thankful to be rid of such a temptation. We may now perceive wherein his sin was found. I think it lay in five particulars.

First, it is evident from the passage in Isaiah 39 that *he was greatly delighted with their company.* It is said, "Hezekiah was glad of them." In this Chapter it is said, "He hearkened unto them." He was very pleased to see them. It is an ill sign when a Christian takes great solace in the company of the worldling, more especially when that worldling is profane. The Babylonians were wicked idolaters, it was not right for the lover of Jehovah to press them to his bosom. He should have felt towards them, "As for your gods I loathe them, for I worship the God who made Heaven and earth, neither can I receive you into close familiarity, because you are no lovers of the Lord my God." Courtesy is due from the Christian to all men, but the unholy intimacy which allows a Believer to receive an unregenerate person as his bosom friend is a sin. "Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" applies not only to marriage, but to all other intimate unions which amount to yoking together. I would not, as a Christian, link my name in the same firm with an

ungodly man, because, whether I choose it or not, however high my integrity may be, if my partner chooses to do doubtful actions I must be held responsible in a measure for his sins both before God and men. It is well when those who are yoked together both pull the same way; but what communion has Christ with Belial? Here was Hezekiah's first sin—just the very same sin that Jehoshaphat fell into when he made ships, in connection with the idolatrous king of Israel, to go to Tarshish for gold; the ships were wrecked at Eziongeber, and very justly so, for when God's servants go into connection with God's enemies, what can they expect but a frown from their Master?

The next sin which he committed was that *he evidently leaned to their alliance.* Now Hezekiah was the king of a little territory, almost as insignificant as a German principality, and his true strength would have been to have leaned upon his God, and to have made no show whatever of military power. It was by God that he had been defended—why should he not still rest upon the invisible Jehovah? But no, he thinks, "If I could associate with the Babylonians, they are a rising people, it will be well for me." Mark this—God takes it hard of His people when they leave His arm for an arm of flesh. O lover of the Lord Jesus, if you leave the arm of your Beloved, if you cease to lean on Him and begin to lean upon your own craft or policy, or upon your dearest and best friend, you will smart for it. "Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." It was this getting away from God, this ceasing to walk by faith, this wanting to depend in a carnal manner upon the king of Babylon which provoked the Lord to anger.

Hezekiah's next sin was, *his unholy silence concerning his God.* He does not appear to have said a word to them about Jehovah. Would it have been polite? Etiquette, nowadays, often demands of a Christian that he should not intrude his religion upon company. Away with such etiquette! It is the etiquette of Hell. True courtesy to my fellow man's soul makes me speak to him if I believe that soul to be in danger. Someone once complained of Mr. Rowland Hill that he was too earnest, and he told them in reply the following story. When walking at Wootton-under-Edge he saw part of a chalk pit fall in upon some men. "So," he said, "I ran into the village, crying, Help! Help! Help! And nobody said, 'Dear me, how excited the old gentleman is, he is much too earnest.' Why," he said, "and when I see a soul perishing, am I not to cry help, and be in earnest? Surely souls are yet more to be cared for than bodies." But nowadays, if one cares about fashion, one must be gagged in all companies. You must not intrude, nor be positive in your opinions, if you would have the good word of fashionable people. O Sirs, when disease is abroad in the land, the physician is never an intruder among dying men; and so you who have Christ, the true Medicine, will never be intruders in God's eyes, if

with prudence, but yet with boldness, you speak concerning the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Shame on your dumb tongues! Shame on your silent lips, if you speak not of Him! Oh, by the love which Jesus manifested on the Cross, bear some such love to your fellow men; and as He broke through all things, even through the bonds of life and death that He might save you, break through some of these flimsy ties, if by any means you may save some.

Meanwhile, mark that Hezekiah sadly made up for his silence about his God by *loudly boasting about himself*. If he had little to say of his God, he had much to say about his spices, his armor, and his gold and silver; and I dare say he took them to see the conduit and the pool which he had made, and the various other wonders of engineering which he had carried out. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, etiquette lets us talk of men, but about our God we must be silent. God forbid we should defer to such a rule. Hezekiah did as good as say, while he was showing them all his wealth, "See what a great man I am!" He would not have said it in words, but that was the spirit of it—self-glorification, and self-glorification, too, before the very people who would take advantage of it.

Surely his sin also lay in his *putting himself on a level with these Babylonians.* Suppose he had gone to see *them* what would they have shown him? Why, they would have shown him *their* granaries, *their* armory, *their* gold and *their* silver. Now, they come to see him, and he is a worshipper of the invisible God, and he glories in just the same treasures as those in which they also trusted. When a Christian constantly acts like a worldly man, can it be possible that he is acting rightly? When the two actions are precisely the same, and you discern no difference, is there not grave cause to suspect that there *is* no difference? By the fruit must you know the tree, and if two trees bear precisely the same fruit, is there not cause to suspect that they are the same sort of trees? Dear Friends, may you and I shun this sin of Hezekiah, and not try to match ourselves with sinners as to the joys of this present life. If they say, "Here are my treasures," let us tell them about the "city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God," and say, "Our treasure is above."

Let us imitate the noble Roman lady, who when her friend showed her all her trinkets, waited till her two fair boys came home from school, and then pointed to them, and said, "These are my jewels." When you hear the worldling vaunting his happiness, drop in a gentle word, and say, "I too have my earthly comforts, for which I am grateful; but my best delights are not here, they spring neither from corn, nor wine, nor oil, nor could spices, and gold, and music render them to me. My heart is in Heaven, my heart is not here; I have set my soul upon things above; Jesus is my joy, and His love is my delight. You tell me of what you love, permit me to tell you of what I love. I have listened patiently to you, now listen to one of the songs of Zion; I have walked with you over your estate, now let me take you over mine; you have told me of all the good things which you enjoy, do lend me a few minutes of your attention while I tell you of still better things which make up my portion." The Lord takes it hard on the part of His people if they are ashamed of the blessings which He gives them, and if they never boast in the Cross of Christ they have good cause to be ashamed of themselves.

This, then, we think to be Hezekiah's sin. Putting it altogether it was a delight in worldly company; beginning to lean to an arm of flesh; saying little of his God, making much of himself, and putting himself on a level with worldly men by making his boast where they made theirs.

III. The third matter we will handle very briefly, namely, THE PUNISHMENT AND THE PARDON.

We may generally find a man's sin written in his punishment. We sow the thorns, and then God flogs us with them. If Jesus loves you, my dear Brother or Sister—if there is anything in the world that keeps you from Him—He will take it away. It may be a favorite child, it may be your health, it may be your wealth; God hates idols, and He will never allow anything to stand between our heart's love and Himself. It may be a very painful operation, but it will be a necessary one for you that God should grind your idol in pieces, and make you to drink of it with bitterness and sorrow. Moreover, mark you, He threatened to make the same persons the means of Hezekiah's punishment who had been the means of his sin. "You were so pleased while you showed these Babylonians your treasures, these very men shall take them away." And so, Brothers and Sisters, the things in which we confide shall be our disappointment; if we take our hearts away from God and give them to any earthly things, those earthly things will be a curse to us. Our sins are the mothers of our sorrows.

Judgments being therefore threatened, Hezekiah and the people humbled themselves. If you and I would escape chastisement we must humble ourselves. The child who bares his back to the rod shall not be very harshly struck. Submission more easily averts blows from God's hand than anything else. Yet although God removed the punishment as far as Hezekiah was concerned, *He did not remove the consequences*. You see, the consequences of showing the Babylonians the treasures were just these: they would be sure to go back and tell their king, "That little prince has a vast store of spice and armor, and all sorts of precious things; we must before long pick a quarrel with him, and despoil his rich hive. We must bring these choice treasures to Babylon, they will repay us for the toils of war." That was the certain result of Hezekiah's folly; and though God did forget the sin and promise to remove the punishment from Hezekiah, yet He did not avert the consequences from another generation. So with us. Many a sin which the Believer has committed God has pardoned, but the consequences come all the same; you may have the guilt forgiven but you cannot undo the sin, there it remains, and our children and our children's children may have to smart for sins which God has forgiven us. A spendthrift may be forgiven for his profligacy, but he sends a stream of poverty down to the next generation. Some sins are peculiarly mischievous in this way, and I doubt not but that all sin inevitably brings mischief upon the man committing it, and upon all around him in a measure, and that God who forgives the sin leaves the consequences to work themselves out *according to His will.* That is a very solemn matter, is it not? You let loose the river, it will flow on forever. The action of today will affect all time; more or less it will affect every coming age, for your actions affect another man, and that other man another, and even Eternity itself shall hear the echo trembling

along its halls of your momentary action which you, perhaps, without thought, committed against the living God. This should make us very careful, surely, in our walk.

IV. I have now to conclude by asking you thoughtfully TO GATHER UP THE LESSONS OF THIS NARRATIVE, for I find I have not time to do so except in hints. This narrative is very full of instruction. It needs half-a-dozen sermons instead of one. The lessons, however, which come uppermost are just these. *See, then, what is in every man's heart.* This was in Hezekiah's heart—he was one of the best of men; the same is in your heart. You are humble today, you will be proud as Satan tomorrow if left by God's Grace. You little know, my dear Brothers and Sisters, even though you are renewed creatures—you little know the villainy of your old nature. Perhaps it is not possible for any one of us to know our full capacity for guilt. Only let the restraining hand of Providence and Grace be taken away, and the wisest of us might become a very madman with the rage of sin. O God, teach us to know our hearts, and help us, while we remember how filthy they are, never to be proud!

In the next place, *tremble at anything that is likely to bring out this evil of your heart.* Above all, be afraid of prosperity; be thankful, but do not be overjoyed; walk humbly with your God. Let there be a double guard set over your heart. A pirate very seldom attacks a ship that is going out unloaded; it is the vessel that is well stored that the buccaneer will seek to gain, and so with you—when God loads you with Mercy the devil will try to take you if he can. Set a double watch, and keep your ship as far out of his course as may be; and when you must be thrust into temptation, and must mix with worldly men, be then watchful above all other times, lest by any means you be taken in the net. Riches and worldly company are the two cankers that eat out the very life of godliness. Christian, be aware of them!

Should we not be taught by this narrative *to cry out every day against vainglory?* Ah, it is not those standing in prominent spheres who are alone in danger of it, but all others. I remember firing a shot once with much greater success than I knew of. A certain person had frequently said to me that I had been the subject of her earnest prayers lest I should be exalted above measure, for she could see my danger, and after having heard this so many times that I really knew it by heart, I just made the remark that I thought it would be my duty to pray for her, too, lest she should be exalted above measure. I was greatly amused when this answer came, "I have no temptation to be proud; my experience is such that I am in no danger whatever of being puffed up," not knowing that her little speech was about the proudest statement that could have been made, and that everybody else thought her to be the most officious and haughty person within ten miles. Why, do you not believe there may be as much pride in rags as in an alderman's gown? Is it not just as possible for a man to be proud in a dust cart, as if he rode in Her Majesty's chariot? A man may be just as proud with half a yard of ground as Alexander with all his kingdoms, and may be just as lifted up with a few pence as Croesus with all his treasure. Pray against pride, dear Friends, wherever you may be. Pride will grow on a dunghill as well

as in the king's garden. Pray against pride and vainglory, and God give you Grace to keep it under!

And then supposing that you should have given way to it, *see the sorrow which it will bring you, and if you would escape that sorrow imitate Hezekiah and humble yourself.* Down, Man, down! "God resists the proud"—as long as you are up He resists you—"but He gives Grace to the humble." When God is wrestling with man's pride, let the man struggle as he will, He will throw him; but when the man is down, God lifts him up. None so ready to lift up a fallen foe as our God! Bow yourself, then, Christian, and if you are not conscious of any particular pride, be humble because you are not so conscious, for pride is very likely there. It is when we think we are humble we are most proud, and perhaps when we bemoan our pride it may be then that we are truly humble. Let us go unto God by Jesus Christ, and ask Him to search out this pride if it is there, and to lay us low at the foot of the Cross.

Lastly, *let us cry to God never to leave us.* "Lord, take not Your Holy Spirit from us! Withdraw not from us Your restraining Grace! Have You not said, 'I the Lord will keep it, I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day'? Lord, keep me everywhere! Keep me in the valley, that I murmur not of my low estate! Keep me on the mountain, that I wax not giddy through pride at my being lifted up so high! Keep me in my youth, when my passions are strong! Keep me in my old age, when I am conceited of my wisdom, and may therefore be a greater fool than even the young! Keep me when I come to die, lest at the very last I should deny You! Keep me living, keep me dying, keep me laboring, keep me suffering, keep me fighting, keep me resting, keep me everywhere, for everywhere I need You, O my God."

The Lord keep us looking unto Jesus, and resting alone upon His finished work. If we have never trusted Christ at all, may the Lord bring us to rest upon His dear Son now! O Sinner! There is but one door of hope for you, and it is open! Trust Jesus and live!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 KINGS 20.

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THE VOICE OF CHOLERA
NO. 705

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 12, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Can two walk together, except they are agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing? Will a bird fall in a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it? Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all? If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it." Amos 3:3-6.

WE have all felt grieved when reading our bills of mortality to observe the mysterious spread of cholera in our great city. It is high time that it should be made the subject of special prayer, and that the nation should seek unto the Lord for its removal. While as yet there has been but comparatively little of the evil, we should be humbled under it, that we may be spared a greater outbreak.

There are different ways of looking at this disease. Men viewing it from one point of view have frequently despised those who have regarded it under another aspect. Occasionally Christians indignantly express themselves concerning those who speak of cholera as the product of ascertained and governable causes, to be checked and even prevented by due attention to the laws of health. I have never shared in that indignation. It seems to me that this disease is to a great extent in our own hands, and that if all men would take scrupulous care as to cleanliness, and if better dwellings were provided for the poor, and if overcrowding were effectually prevented, and if the water supply could be larger, and other sanitary improvements could be carried out, the disease, most probably, would not occur; or, if it did visit us occasionally, as the result of filth in other countries, it would be in a very mitigated form. I am thankful that there are many men of intelligence and scientific information who can speak well upon this point, and I hope they will never cease to speak until all men learn that the laws of cleanliness and health are as binding upon us as those of morality. So far from a Christian being angry with those who instruct the people in useful secular knowledge, he ought rather to be thankful for them, and hope that their teaching may be powerful with the masses. The Gospel has no quarrel with ventilation, and the Doctrines of Grace have no dispute with chloride of lime. We preach repentance and faith, but we do not

denounce whitewash; and as much as we advocate holiness, we always have a good word for cleanliness and sobriety.

We would promote with all our hearts that which may honor God, but we cannot neglect that which may bless our neighbors whom we desire to love even as ourselves. On the other hand, it is even more common for those who look to natural causes alone to sneer at Believers who view the disease as a mysterious scourge from the hand of God. It is admitted that it would be most foolish to neglect the appointed means of averting sickness; but sneer who may, we believe it to be equally an act of folly to forget that the hand of the Lord is in all this. The singular manner in which this disease seizes frequently upon unlikely persons, and turns aside from its expected path, should show us that there is an unseen hand which directs its gloomy circuit. Let the wise man work below, but fix his hope above; let him cleanse and purge away the hotbeds of death, but let him look up to the Lord and Giver of Life for success in all his doings.

It is not my business this morning to describe the sanitary aspect of the subject; this is not the day nor the place, but I shall claim a full liberty to enter into the theological view of it, and if that should happen to excite the contempt of the practical man, we shall be more grieved for his narrowness of mind than for his contempt of us. We do not despise him, but wish him God speed in his reforms, and he should not despise us, but recognize in us his true allies. We believe that God sends all pestilences, let them come how they may, and that He sends them with a purpose, let them be removed in whatever way they may; and we conceive that it is our business as ministers of God to call the people's attention to God in the disease, and teach them the lesson which God would have them learn. I am not among those, as you know, who believe that every affliction is a judgment upon the particular person to whom it occurs. We perceive that in this world the best of men often endure the most of suffering, and that the worst of men frequently escape; and therefore we do not believe in judgments to particular persons except in extraordinary cases; but we do, nevertheless, very firmly believe that there are national judgments, and that national sins provoke national chastisements. As to individuals, their punishment or reward is reserved for the next state; but nations will not exist in the next world—there is no such thing as a judgment of nations, as such, at the Last Great Day; that will be the judgment of individuals one by one. The trial and punishment of nations takes place in this state, and it is here that we are to look for the Judgment of God upon national sin.

Upon the present visitation as a national chastisement we shall speak this morning, and I shall not detain you with further preface but conduct you at once to the questions of the text.

I. THE FIRST QUESTION is a metaphor taken from the traveler: *"Can two walk together except they are agreed?"* which means, being interpreted, that it is no wonder if God does not continue to walk with a sinful people; that it is not to be expected that when a nation falls out with God, God should continue to bless it. Two travelers have been walking together for some little time, but all of a sudden they fall to angry words, and after a while one strikes the other and maltreats him. You cannot suppose that the person thus attacked will continue to walk with him who maliciously assaults him. They must part company. Now, when God walks with a nation, that nation prospers, but if that nation falls to words with God, quarrels with Him about His will and Law, and rushes perversely into sinful courses—if there are some in it who would have no God at all, who do their best to eradicate His very name from the earth which He Himself has made, then we cannot expect that God should continue to walk with such offenders. Brothers and Sisters, let me ask you soberly, without fanaticism, to consider whether there has not been enough in England, and especially in this great city, to make God angry with us? Has there not been grievous disagreement between the dwellers in this city and God? Has there not been enough to make Him say, "I will walk no more with this people: I will chasten them sorely, and send heavy judgments upon them"?

We will not speak of those sins of this city which are common to all other places; but let me ask whether *the drunkenness* of England is not enough to provoke God to strike it with all His thunderbolts. If it is said that there is as much drunkenness elsewhere, I reply that possibly there may be places found which are quite as besotted, where the gin palace blazes with glaring lights at every corner, and the gates through which drunkards reel to Hell are opened at every turn—it may be so; but I must still hold that there is no other country where drunkenness is carried on to such an extent under so strong a protest, for drunkenness happens to be a sin against which not only the pulpit, the press, and the bench are continually exclaiming, but tens of thousands of earnest, indefatigable, courageous, self-denying men and women are both by their example and their teaching, denouncing this vice. We certainly have no deficiency of protests against excess of drink, for there are few companies in which the most sweeping censures are not frequently heard. There is not a place throughout the world where drunkenness is so vehemently and abundantly cried down as in England; there is no place where there is established so strong a public sentiment against this degrading form of

self-indulgence. There has been much done, not, I say, only by those who preach the Gospel, which lays the axe at the root of all sin, but also by those who dedicate their strength to the sawing off of this particular limb from the great tree of evil; so that this vice is known by every man to be a vice, and is no longer winked at as a venial offense.

It wears upon its front the damning mark; it is no longer misnamed festive, and excused as an amiable weakness. The public mind to a great extent is enlightened upon the subject of strong drink, and consequently this sin of drunkenness is more God-provoking in this country than in any other. There may be countries where there is just as much drunkenness, but none in which the protest is more clear and plain, and we all hold that sin is increased by the measure of light against which a man commits it, and that when an evil practice is by the common consent of mankind denounced and put down, it becomes the more atrocious on the part of those who still pursue it. Alas, alas! This drunken city may well expect that God should visit it.

Moreover, we know enough—and we do not wish to know more of the evil which the moon sees—of *the debauchery* with which certain of the streets of our city are reeking. We thank God it has never come to such a pass in England, that we nationally recognize and systematically regulate lasciviousness, so that it may be indulged in with comparative impunity, but there can be no sort of doubt that among all classes and ranks of men there is enough of lewdness to bring down Heaven's wrath upon our city. The sins of the flesh are sure to be visited before long by that God who loathes iniquity, and in whose nostrils fornication is a stench. He will not forever endure this abounding sin, for it is committed, be it remembered, in a country famous above all others for its love of home and its estimation of the joys which cluster around the family hearth. We have not the pestilential influence of a licentious court and a degraded public opinion, but this sin is carried on in the teeth of a general reverence for purity. Shall not God visit London for the sins which nightly pollute her streets, fester in gilded halls, and riots amid revelry and music? Like a terrible monster, the social evil drags our daughters down to destruction, and our young men to the gates of the grave, and while this lasts we need not wonder if God's health-giving Providence should refuse to walk with us, for He cannot be agreed with a people who choose the way of filthiness.

Constant neglect of the worship of God is a sin for which London is peculiarly and pre-eminently guilty. In some of our country towns and villages the accommodation in places of worship is even larger than the population, and I know places in England where there is scarcely a soul to be found at home at the hour of public worship—certainly not more

than absolutely necessary to nurse the sick, care for the infants, and protect the doors, for the whole population turns out to attend a place of worship. But in London the habitual forsakers of public worship are probably in a large majority. It must be so, because we know that even if they wished to go, the provision of seat room is most lamentably short of what they would require, and yet, short as it is, there is not half so much need of churches and chapels in London as there is of inclination to go to either the one or the other. The masses of our people regard not God, care not for the Lord Jesus, and have no thought about eternal things. This is a Christian city we sometimes say, but where shall be found more thorough heathens than we may find here? In Canton, Calcutta, or even Timbuktu, the people have at least a form of worship and a reverence for some idea of a god, but here tens of thousands make no pretense of religious worship. I declare unto you all that whereas you think Christianity to be well known in our streets and lanes, you only think so because you have not penetrated into their depths—for thick darkness covers the people. There are discoveries yet to be made in this city, that may make the hearts of Christendom melt for shame that we should have permitted such God-dishonoring ignorance, that in the very blaze of the sun, as we think our country to be, there should be black spots where Christian light has never penetrated.

O London! Do you think that God's Sabbaths are forever to be forgotten; that the voice of the Gospel is to sound in your ears and forever to be despised? Shall you forever turn your foot from God's House and despise the ministrations of His Truth, and shall He not visit such a city as this? This dreaded cholera is but a gentle blow from His hand, but if it is not felt, and its lesson is not learned, there may come, instead of this, a pestilence which may reap the multitude as corn is reaped with the sickle; or He may permit us to be ravaged by a pestilence worse than the plague—I mean the pestilence of deadly, soul-destroying error. He may remove the candle of His Gospel out of its place, and may take away the Bread of Life from those who have despised it, and then, O great city, your doom is sealed!

Brothers and Sisters, if there is any one thing which yet provokes God above all this, it is the fact that, *we have once again, as a nation, permitted downright Popery to claim to be our national religion.* Dark is the day, and dismal is the hour which sees the ancient superstitions defiling the houses which are at least nominally dedicated to the God of Heaven. In our Established Church the Gospel is no longer dominant, albeit that a little band of good and faithful men still linger in it, and are like a handful of salt amid general putrefaction. We have no longer any right to speak of our national Protestant Church; it is not Protestant, it tolerates

barefaced Popery, and swarms with worshippers of the god whom the baker bakes in the oven, and whom they bite with their teeth. Not many streets from this building in which we are assembled you may have your candles, and your incense, and your capes, and your robes, with all the other pomp and vanities of the detestable idolatry of Rome! That Romanism against which Latimer bore testimony at the stake has been allowed again to hold its mummeries and practice its fantastic tricks in the name of this nation, until it counts its deluded admirers by tens of thousands! That monster, which stained Smithfield with gore and made it an ash heap for the martyrs of God has come back to you; the old wolf that tore your fathers and tore their palpitating hearts out of their bosoms, you have allowed to come back into your houses, and you are cherishing it and feeding it with your children's meat.

Once again, the harlot of Babylon flaunts her finery in our faces almost without rebuke. Do not tell me it is not Popery, it is the same Antichrist with which your fathers wrestled, and a man with but half his wits about him may see it to be so—and yet this land bears it, and rejoices in it, and crouches at the foot of a priest once more. Our great ones, our delicate women, and dainty lords, are once again the willing vassals of priest-craft and superstition; and amid all this, if anyone speaks out, he is assailed as *uncharitable*, and abhorred as a troublemaker in Israel. Is it for nothing that God has favored this land with the Gospel? Must all her light be turned to darkness? Must all the gains of the valiant men of old be lost by the sloth and cowardice of this thoughtless generation? In days of yore, men like Knox and Welch in Scotland, and Hugh Latimer, and John Bradford, fought like lions for the Truth of God, and are we to yield like cowardly curs? Are the men of oak succeeded by the men of willow? The men who cried, "No Popery here!" now sleep within their sepulchers, and their descendants wear the yoke which their fathers scorned. Shall not God visit us for this? I would that a voice of thunder could awaken this slumbering generation. I am for liberty of conscience for every man—I would have, by all manner of means, the Catholic as free to practice his religion as anyone else; I would have religion left to its own native power for its support, and would allow no church to offer to God what it had taken from an unwilling people by the legalized robbery of a church-rate [tax] and tithe; but, above all things, if we must be doomed to have an Established Church, I pray God it may not forever be a den of superstition and the haunt of Papist heresies! If the Church of England does not sweep Tractarianism out of her midst, it should be the daily prayer of every Christian that God would sweep her utterly away from this nation; for the old leprosy of

Rome ought not to be sanctioned and supported by a land which has shed so much of her blood to be purged from it!

Can two walk together, then, except they are agreed? And as these things cannot be supposed to be agreeable to the mind and will of God, we cannot wonder if there should be a plague upon our cattle, and then a plague upon men, and if these should come sevenfold as heavy as they have ever come as yet.

II. THE SECOND QUESTION of the Prophet is, *"Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den if he has caught nothing?"* Amos had observed that a lion does not roar without reason. By this question he brings forward the second Truth of God, that *when God speaks it is not without a cause,* and especially when He speaks with a threatening voice. My Brothers and Sisters, our God is too gracious to send us this cholera without a motive; and He is moreover too wise, for we all know that judgments frequently repeated lose their force. It is like the cry of "Wolf," if there is no meaning in it, men disregard it. God therefore never multiplies judgments unnecessarily. Besides, He is too great to trifle with men's lives. We heard of some 1,200 or more who died in a week in London, but did we estimate the aggregate of personal pain couched in that number, the aggregate of sorrow brought to so many hundred families, the aggregate too of eternal interests which were involved in those sudden deaths? Time and eternity, both of them big with tremendous importance, were wrapped up, just so many times in those hundreds who fell beneath the Mower's scythe. Do you think the Lord does this for nothing? The great Lion of Vengeance has not roared unless sin has provoked Him.

Since I have already indicated our great public sins, I would like to ask Christians present how far they have been concerned in them. You who profess to be people of God, and who recognize God's hand in this visitation, I ask you how far has justice found provocation in you? What have you had to do, professing Christians, with *the drunkenness* of this city? Are you sure that you are quite clear of it? Have you by your teaching and by your example shown men that the religion of Jesus Christ is not consistent with drunkenness? Have you tried to put down this vice, or are you in some degree a fellow criminal, an accomplice before or after the fact? Oh if you have been guilty, I pray you seek to be purged of this sin. You cannot wipe out all the national iniquity, but if each man reformed himself of this vice, by God's Grace, this great evil would cease. Let each Christian look at home. How far you professors of religion—how far are you clear in the matter of *sins of the flesh?* Has there never been any lightness of speech about these sins? When merriment has become uproarious upon impurity, have you ever joined

in such laughter? And what about *your* course of conversation? Have you always been free—I will not say from the grosser acts of sin—I scarcely like to ask you such a question, but have you been clear from everything that verged upon it? Have you heard ringing in your ears the precept, "Be you holy, for I am holy"? Has the Holy Spirit by His mighty Grace kept you from indulging in unclean words and thoughts? Have you in any way fallen into lightness of talk and thought, and so helped to increase the flood of this evil? Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, who among us must not confess to some guilt when we remember the Savior's words, "He who looks upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart"? Let us bow our heads in penitence, and seek to the God of all Grace that He would not roar over this His prey, but be pleased to purge us from it that we may be clean in His Presence!

And so with the other sins which we have indicated. Have we all borne our earnest, fervent protest against them? Have we been negligent of the House of God, or has our continual meeting for public worship cleared us of this? I think most of us are clear here, but I know there are some professors who neglect the assembling of themselves together, who spend their Sunday occasionally, at any rate, where it ought not to be spent, and who thus by their lax example increase the general forgetfulness of God.

And as to this Anglican Popery—have we spoken out about that? Or do we lend it our direct or even *indirect* support? God grant that if we have not repudiated it we may do so, and holding the Truth of God in the love and power of it may we come out of Babylon, lest we be partakers of her plagues in the day when God shall visit her in His wrath. Such, I think, was what Amos indicated by his second question.

III. THE THIRD QUESTION is this: *"Will a bird fall in a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it?"*

The first question was taken from travelers, the second from wild beasts, and the third from fowlers. You see the bird aloft in the sky, all of a sudden it flies to the ground, and is taken in the net; now, Amos says it would not be taken in the net unless a net had been designedly laid to catch it. It is taken because the snare was meant to take it, and Amos means to remind us that men do not die without a design on God's part. It is the same thought as before, but it is held up in another light. The bird is not taken in the net without the design of the fowler, and men do not fall into the net of death without an intent on God's part. Death, with all which it involves on earth and in eternity, is not sent by God without a reason. Forever banished from the Christian's conversation is the word "chance." "It grieves me greatly," says Augustine, "that I ever used that heathenish word, *fortuna,"* for fortune or chance is a base heathenish

invention. *God rules and overrules all things, and He does nothing without a motive.* Brothers and Sisters, the falling of a sparrow to the earth is in the Divine Purpose and answers an end. Every grain of dust that is whirled from the threshing floor is steered with as unerring a Wisdom as the stars in their courses, and there is not a leaf that trembles in the autumn from the tree but is piloted by the Plan and Purpose of the Lord. Surely, then, in so great an event as death, involving as we have already said, so much of pain to the person falling, so much of bereavement and sorrow to the families of those who are struck, we cannot believe but that God has a Purpose. The insatiable archer is not permitted to shoot his bolts at random—every arrow that flies bears this inscription, "I have a message from God for you." When God permits disease to walk through the streets at night, to stretch out his mighty but invisible hand, and take away here a child, and there an adult, and consign to the grave those who might have otherwise long survived, you cannot believe that the Lord commissioned so dread a messenger, without intending to answer some end by his errand. Let us conclude most surely that a Purpose, consistent with the Love and Justice of God, lies hidden in the present harvest of death.

IV. Now follows a FOURTH QUESTION: *"Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all?* By which he means that the fowler does not remove the net until he has caught his bird, so that this fourth question implies that inasmuch as God had a Purpose in sending tribulation, we may expect that He will not remove it until that Purpose is answered. Whatever God has to say to London, if it is heard at once He need not speak again, but if it is not heard the first time, there shall come a second voice, and yet another. The fowler takes not away his net unless some bird is caught, and God takes not away the trouble which He sends unless He has answered His Design by it. If you ask me what I think to be the Design, I believe it to be this—to waken up our indifferent population, to make them remember that there is a God, to render them susceptible to the influences of the Gospel, to drive them to the House of Prayer, to influence their minds to receive the Word, and moreover to startle Christians into energy and earnestness that they may work while it is called today. My reason for selecting this subject at all was that I might be helpful in the hands of God the Holy Spirit to aid this great Design, that you, dear Friends, might hear at once God's Voice, that for you, at any rate, it might not be necessary that there should be a repetition of the judgment. Brothers and Sisters, you are acquainted with history, and you have reason to bless God, I am sure, in turning over its pages that we have, during the last 50 years, been spared many of those

dreadful calamities which in former days occurred in this and other lands.

Who can read the story of the plague of London without a shudder? And who can close the book without thankfulness that such a black death is unknown among us? Who has read of famines in this land without gratitude for the abundance of bread? Who can turn to the descriptions of the sack and pillage of cities under such armies as those conducted by Tilly and other savage commanders, without thankfulness that we live in better days? Who can even read the story of the last campaign in Austria without thanking God that our country is an island, and that so we are preserved from the horrors of war? But it is much to be feared that a constant run of prosperity, perpetual peace and freedom from disease, may breed in our minds just what it has done in all human minds before, namely, security and pride, heathenism and forgetfulness of God. It is a most solemn fact that human nature can scarcely bear a long continuance of peace and health. It is almost necessary that we should be, every now and then, salted with affliction lest we putrefy with sin. God grant we may have neither famine, nor sword; but as we have pestilence in a very slight degree, it becomes us to ask the Lord to bless it to the people that a tenderness of conscience may be apparent throughout the multitude, and they may recognize the hand of God. Already I have been told by Christian Brothers laboring in the east of London, that there is a greater willingness to listen to Gospel Truth, and that if there is a religions service it is more acceptable to the people now than it was; for which I thank God as an indication that affliction is answering His Purpose. There was, perhaps, no part of London more destitute of the means of Divine Grace, and of the desire to use the means, than that particular district where the plague has fallen; and if the Lord shall but make those teeming thousands anxious to hear the Gospel of Jesus, and teach them to trust in Him, then the Purpose will be answered; and without a doubt the great Fowler will gather up His net. May it be so, O Lord, for Your Son Jesus Christ's sake.

V. The questions have all worked to one point. We have seen that it is no wonder if disease should come, we have learned that it does not come without a cause, we have seen that when it does come there is a Purpose, and that it will not be removed unless that Purpose is answered, and now we are prepared to take the further step, raised by THE FIFTH QUESTION, namely, that an awakening should be the result. *"If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid?"* In times of war in olden times there were men stationed upon watch towers, and when they saw the enemy coming the cornet was sounded, and the people rushed to arms. The sound of a trumpet was the warning of war. This

cholera is like the sound of a trumpet. The voice of the Christian ministry is not heard. Those who go to listen to it do not all hear it, for they hear as though they heard not; while the great masses know nothing, and care less about the preacher's message. The ministry of London is not altogether powerless to those who attend it, but it is utterly without point or force to the dense masses who lie outside the House of God. Disease, however, is a trumpet which must be heard. Its echoes reach the miserable attics where the poor are crowded together, and have never heard nor cared for the name of Christ—*they* hear the sound, and as one after another dies, they tremble. In the darkest cellar in the most crowded haunt of vice; yes, and in the palaces of kings, in the halls of the rich and great, the sound finds an entrance and the cry is raised, "The death plague is come! The cholera is among us!" All men are compelled to hear the trumpet voice—would to God they heard it to better purpose! Would to God all of us were awakened to a searching of heart, and, above all, led to fly to Christ Jesus, the Great Sacrifice for sin, and to find in Him a rescue from the greater plague, the wrath to come!

VI. The great end and design of God, then, it seems, is to awaken the city, and that awakening should follow from the fact declared in THE LAST QUESTION: *"If there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it?"*

Here is not intended *moral* evil—*that* rests with *man*—but *physical* evil or calamity, the evil of pestilence or famine! Shall there be cholera in the city, and God has not done it? My soul cowered down under the majesty of that question as I read it; it seemed to stretch its black wings over my head, and had I not known them to be the wings of God, I would have been afraid! The text talked with me in this fashion—It is not the cholera which has slain these hundreds, the cholera was but the sword; the hand which scattered death is the hand of a greater than mere disease. *God Himself* is traversing London. God, with silent footsteps walks the hospitals, enters the chamber, strikes the wayfarer in the street, and chills the heart of the suppliant kneeling by his bed. God, the great Judge of All, at whose belt swing the keys of Death and Hell, the Mysterious One whose Voice bids the pillars of Heaven's starry roof to tremble, who made the stars, and can quench them at His will—it was none other than *He* who walked down our crowded courts, and entering our lanes and alleys called one after another the souls of men to their last account! *God is abroad!*

There are times when God comes especially near to men. He is everywhere, and yet He is frequently described in Scripture as saying, "Let Us go down, that We may see whether it is altogether according to the report." God has come down, and is going through this city. Tread

solemnly when you go to your business tomorrow morning; you walk the streets where God has walked. You who will go to the cemetery with your dead ones, I had almost said. Take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy ground, for God is there! The last time this disease was here I had a pervading sense of the Presence of God wherever I went. It seemed to me as if the veil between time and eternity were more transparent than usual. If anything ought to compel our attention to God's Voice, it should be the remembrance that it is attended with God's Presence, and if anything ought to make us feel His rod, it is the fact that it is not the rod that smites, but God Himself that uses the rod.

Leaving the text itself, I want to gather up my thoughts, as God shall help me, in a few earnest words. My dear Hearers, I would speak as God's mouth to you as His Holy Spirit shall enable me. Is not the Lord speaking to all of us, both saints and sinners, and warning us to be agreed with Him? O you who are His blood-bought people, Believers in Jesus, is there any sin that has separated you from communion with Christ? Have you fallen into anything which has provoked the Spirit, so that His comforts are withdrawn? If so, by deep humility and earnest prayer, standing at the foot of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, pray—

"Return, You heavenly Dove, return
Sweet Messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made You mourn,
And drove You from my breast."

At all times it is well for the Christian to acquaint himself with God and be at peace, but especially just now. How can you help others, if you yourself have lost the sense of the Love of God shed abroad in your heart? I know you are His, and He will never cast you away, but if you do not enjoy His Presence you will be as weak as water.

And oh, those of you who are not His people, can you bear to be at disagreement with God? How can He walk with you? You ask His protection, but how can you expect it if you are not agreed with Him? Now, if two men walk together, there must be a place where they meet each other. Do you know where that is? It is at the Cross. Sinner, if you trust in Jesus, God will meet you there. That is the place where true At-one-ment [Atonement] is made between God and sinners. If you go repenting to Jesus, saying, "Have mercy upon my iniquity; wash me in Your blood," you shall be agreed with God, and then you may look forward to living or dying with equal delight, for if we live we shall walk with God on earth, and if we die we shall walk with God above.

Brothers and Sisters, while the lion roars, should we not remove any evil which may have caused his anger to burn? Christian, search yourself now and purge out the old leaven. The head of the Jewish household, when the feast of unleavened bread draws near, not only puts away the

loaves of bread ordinarily used in the household, but takes a candle and searches every part of the house lest there should be even a crumb of leaven anywhere. He cleans it all out, that he may keep the feast not with leavened bread. Now, Christian, as this is God's visitation, ask for the candle of the Holy Spirit to discover any *little* sin. Let any little self-indulgence into which we have fallen be conscientiously given up, and for the sake of that dear Savior who denied Himself every comfort for us, let us take up our cross and follow Him, determined that if the lion shall roar, it shall not be because of any prey in us.

And oh, Sinner, against whom God has been roaring, do you not remember His own words, "Beware, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you"? Who can remove the iniquity which provokes the Lord to jealousy, except the dying Savior, the Lord Jesus? He has put away sin by bearing it in His own body, and if you trust Him, there shall he no sin in you to provoke God. But it shall be said of you as of Israel, "In those days, and in that time, said the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

Moreover, the Lord our God speaks to us by His Providence, and says, "Submit yourselves, this day, to God's Design." The great Fowler has spread the net—He will not take away that net till He has caught the bird. Be caught in it. Saint, fly not from your God. If He puts out even an angry hand, fly into it—there is no shelter from an angry God but in the pierced hand of His dear Son. When vengeance would strike a heavy blow, the closer you can get to it, the less will it wound you. Get close to God in Christ; cling to Him, and He will not destroy you. Fly to Jesus! Sinner, fly! Be taken in God's net. Say to God, "What would You have me to do? Would you have me to be Yours? Here I am, Lord; before you take me in the net of death, take me in the net of Grace. Before the snares of Hell prevent me, let the blessed snare of Your Eternal Love sweetly entangle me. I am, I would be, Yours."

Be awake, Christian, and be aware of God's Purpose, for the trumpet is sounding, and when the trumpet sounds, the Christian must not slumber. Let the Presence of God infuse into you a more than ordinary courage and zeal. My Brothers and Sisters, I wish I could speak to you this morning as I had hoped to have done, for then I would thrown my whole soul into every word. I charge you, as you love Jesus, as you know the value of your own soul, now, if never before, be in earnest for the salvation of the sons of men! Men are always dying, time like a mighty rushing stream is always bearing them away, but now they are hurried down the torrent in increasing numbers. If you and I do not exert

ourselves to teach them the Gospel, upon our heads must be their blood. It is God's work we know to save, but then He works by instruments, and we have His own solemn word for it—"If the watchman warns them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." Are there no houses round your dwelling where Jesus is unknown? Is there no court, no lane, no alley near to where you reside without God and without Christ? Have you no friends unconverted? Have you no acquaintance unsaved? May there not be even sitting in the pew with you some unpardoned person? May there not be, Sunday after Sunday, sitting in the next seat someone who knows not Christ, who was never warned of his danger or pointed to the Remedy? It is a great mercy when the bell tolls if we can say of those who die, "I did all I could to save them from ruin."

I thought when I read Whitefield's words to his congregation; I wish I could always say as much. He said, "Ah, Souls, if you are lost, it is not for lack of praying for, it is not for lack of weeping over, it is not for lack of faithful Gospel preaching." I can say the last, but I cannot say the first as I wish I could; and yet I know that there are some of you here, who, if you are lost, are not lost for lack of warning, nor for lack of teaching, nor for lack of invitation. We have set before you life and death; we have threatened you in God's name, and we have invited you by the precious blood of Jesus. Years ago there seemed to be some hope about you, but it was like the morning cloud and the early dew, for you are still unsaved. When I heard the other day that Mrs. So-and-So was dead, and that she died of cholera, I could not lament, for she was one who had long feared God. When they told me that a worthy young man had fallen, I was sorrowful to have lost so good a student from the College, but I was thankful that one who had served his God so well in his youth had gone to his rest; but if I heard of the death of some of you, it would cause me unmingled grief and fear. Some of you have been sitting here for years who will, I fear, go out of this Tabernacle to destruction—you know you will unless you are changed! If you die as you now are you have nothing to expect but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation! Some of you know well the result of sin, and yet you choose it; your consciences prick you often, and yet you run against them; you have been alarmed and so awakened that it seems impossible that you can continue as you are; but alas, you will not turn and your end is coming.

My Hearer, I can hardly face the thought of your fate; I feel like Elijah when he looked into the face of Hazael, and trembled as he foresaw his history. It is terrible to think of your doom. He who has warned you and prayed for you will meet you in another world, and when he meets you, you shall not have to say he did not speak plainly and pointedly to you;

you will be speechless, because the trumpet was sounded and you did not take the warning, and God was in the city and you would not hear Him, and Death spoke as well as the minister, but you stopped both your ears because you were resolved to die, and your heart was set on mischief. You scorn Eternal Life and choose destruction for the sake of a few paltry pleasures, or a deceitful darling lust which will treacherously stab you through your heart; you let Jesus go, and Heaven go, and all this for a moment's pleasure! Ah, my Hearer, you shall have much to answer for. I speak to you as a dying man, and pray you not to venture into Eternal Wrath. Give these words some consideration, I pray you, and as you consider them, may God the Holy Spirit fasten them as nails in a sure place, and may you seek the Lord while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near, for this is His word to you—"As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?" And Jesus adds His loving words, "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him who hears say, Come. And let him who is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

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FIELDS WHITE FOR HARVEST
NO. 706

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 29, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest." John 4:35.

MANY unbelieving Christians have a very large stock of reasons for not expecting to see many conversions. They suppose that any present manifestation of the Divine Power in connection with the Truth of God is not to be expected. They read the history of past ages and they wonder, and sometimes, when their eyes are sufficiently clear, they look forward with some sort of hope to the repetition of these scenes in future years, that is to say, when they themselves are dead and buried, and a new age shall have come upon the world. But as to God working any wonders in the world now, as to the conversion of thousands now, they do not expect it; and if it were to happen they would be surprised, and beyond all measure astonished. They are forever dwelling in the past, or seeking to roost in the future; but as for *now,* now seeing God's arm made bare, now setting to work for the conversion of men, now expecting that God will win hearts unto Himself, they are not brought up to this mark yet. Their common reason for expecting nothing now is this; that there are yet four months, and then comes the harvest. They say, "This is not the time; we must have patience; we must wait; this is not the man; this is not the hour; this is not the place; we must wait till, under other circumstances, other men being given, we look for grander results; but we must not expect them now; there are yet four months, and then comes the harvest."

You know that this is the general feeling at present in the Christian Church—not to expect any great things now, but to be waiting and watching for something or other which may one of these days, in the order of Providence, "turn up." Meanwhile, it is true that death does not cease to slay! Meanwhile, it is a fact that our cemeteries and graveyards are being crowded, and that multitudes are perishing for lack of knowledge. Meanwhile, it is most true that error stalks like a pestilence through the land. It is true that, as yet, Christ does not see of the travail of His soul, and that few are the travelers who go through the strait gate; but these good people seem indifferent to the perishing millions, and only say, "There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest." I have noticed that this kind of feeling has crept into the smaller agencies, to the individual workers, too. In the Sunday school, how many a teacher does not expect to see the children of his class converted, but fondly hopes that perhaps, when they are grown up, the benefit of the

instruction which he imparts to them may be apparent? "There are yet four months," they say, "and then comes the harvest." The most of those who teach our young people have become hopeful, that perhaps before those young persons shall actually die, or before they come to be gray-headed, some Truth that has been dropped into their hearts may perhaps germinate, and bud, and come to perfection; but they do not expect a present blessing. "There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest." Take the most of our ministers, and what are they looking for? They hope that God may visit their congregations; but as to holding Inquirers' Meetings every week, and expecting to find people crying, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?" after their sermons—all this is not according to their notions. "There are yet four months, and *then* comes the harvest." One of these bright sunny days, one of these long-expected months of which the Prophets have talked so long, perhaps in the Millennium year, which some say is drawing so near, they are expecting wonderful things, for "there are yet four months, and then comes the harvest."

Truly, my Brethren, one's ears have been dinned and dunned with it till one has got sick of hearing that "there are yet four months, and then comes the harvest." Patience is a virtue, but sometimes decision is a greater one. To wait long is well, but not when the harvest is ripe and ready, for then it will lie upon the ground and rot. To wait may be well, but not when men are dying, no, when Hell is filling; not when immortal souls are in jeopardy; not when the plague is raging, and we have, today, to stand between the living and the dead, and wave the censer of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that the plague may be stopped. Four months, indeed; four months! Have there not been months enough already? We have waited long; we have waited till our patience may well have exhausted itself. It was to be four months in the days of our grandfathers; it was to be four months in the days of our fathers; and now it is still to be four months. Oh that we would learn the Savior's words, and say no longer that "there are four months, and then comes the harvest," but let us do as He says, "Lift up your eyes, and look at the fields; for they are already white for harvest." Expect a present blessing; believe that you will have it; go to work to get it, and do not be satisfied unless you have it! Let me dream dreams of the future, and put you off from looking for a blessing only in the future; for though it may be true that your words will be blessed after you are dead, yet do not be content with that hope, but want them to be blessed now. Though, possibly, a sermon may bring a soul to God 20 years after it is preached, yet do not think of that, but think of those who are present while it is preached, and be not satisfied unless now, on the spot, you reap some of that wheat which is already white for harvest.

We shall now come directly to our subject, and may we have strength given by God's Grace to stir up Christian laborers to great and instantaneous diligence.

We shall take our text in three ways—*signs of harvest, needs of harvest, and fears of harvest.*

I. SIGNS OF HARVEST.

"Do you not say, There are yet four months, and then comes harvest? Behold, I say to you, Lift up your eyes, and look at the fields; for they are already white for harvest." What signs were there, when the Savior uttered these words, from which the disciples might effect an immediate gathering of souls? I answer, first, that there was this sign—*that the Savior had preached a sermon and that the whole of His congregation had been converted.* You will remind me that He had but one hearer. Yes, but that is the first point to which I want to come. The conversion of one soul by the Gospel should be to you a hopeful sign that God intends to convert others. For look—the cholera is raging in certain towns—say, on the Continent—and a physician has been studying the disease. He has administered a variety of drugs, but in every case without success. He has prescribed different methods of treatment, but in no case has he succeeded in effecting a cure. At last he has hit upon the right drug, and, administering it, he sees his patient rallying; strength evidently given by the medicine; the struggle ends favorably, and the patient rises to life and health. "Now," says the physician, "I know that I shall have a harvest of men who will be preserved from this disease, because the same medicine which heals one will heal two, will heal twenty, will heal a thousand, or even twenty thousand; it only has to be administered; that one person has been healed by this compound, and it is clear that as many more may be healed as are willing to receive it."

Brothers, we do not lack this sign with regard to the Gospel. We have had it; we have it still. It is clear to you that the Gospel has been blessed to the conversion of some. We, as a Church, can show every week some whom God converts by His Divine Grace. We have not been left without our witnesses at any time, but during the last 12 years God's hand has continually been stretched out. Now we ought to take this as an omen of good. If *some* have found the Savior, why not *more?* Christian Soldier, you have a sword in your hand that has won one battle—why should it not win another, and another, and another? You have the Omnipotence of God with you which has already broken one hard heart; why should it not break other hard hearts? Already one stronghold of the enemy has been captured by the sounding of the silver trumpet; why should not the rest fall too, when with the confidence of faith we sound the silver trumpet yet again? When Napoleon landed on his return from Elba, and one man came and presented himself as willing to serve the Emperor, "Here," said Napoleon, "is at least one recruit." So may we say when we have converts—"Here is one recruit, and thank God for one; for the same attractive influence which draws one will draw multitudes more." We have got the right medicine; we have got the right power, and therefore let us hope that there is a harvest to be reaped now.

But, again; there was another hopeful sign, namely, *that this one convert was at that very moment diligently engaged in making more converts.* "The woman then left her water pot and went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did." We hear a great deal of strategy; it was our Savior's strategy

to bless the men of Samaria through this woman. He said to her, "Go call your husband, and come here." This is the blessing about the Gospel, that if it gets into one person's heart it is sure to run from that one to all those who live in the neighborhood, and who are the surroundings of that saved one. Just strike the match and let the spark drop in the prairie, and what a roaring ocean of flame shall soon come from it! Let God's Grace fall into one soul, and who knows what the end shall be? When this country of ours was all asleep, and religion was at the lowest possible ebb, six young men at Oxford felt the Inspiration of God and they met together to pray. They were expelled by the college for the horrid crime of meeting together to pray, but what was the result of it? Soon, from the Land's End to John o'Groat's House that same Inspiration which had fallen upon those young men had descended upon the multitudes, till from peers of the realm down to the black-faced coal miners, men of all ranks and grades confessed the power of the God of Israel! One of those young men, as you remember, wrote the hymn we sang just now—

"Saw you not the cloud arise,
Little as a human hand?"

It only needs a beginning; get one soul saved and you have got a preacher of Christ at once. There is not a plant that grows by the hedge-side but takes care, as it dies, to scatter all down the bank the seeds of succeeding generations of plants; and you cannot get the Grace of God into a soul but it is sure to try to disseminate the spiritual life, and to bring others to know the holy joy which it itself experiences. Here, then, were two signs of harvest—there was one saved, and that one was trying to bring others to be saved.

But there was a third sign that was still better, namely, *that the others were coming to hear.* There they came, a whole troop of them from that little town, all anxious to listen to the Savior. Oh, it is a blessed sign in these times of ours that men are willing to listen to the preaching of Christ. We can scarcely find places large enough now in which to accommodate the multitude. It is true they will not go to hear some ministers; who would? Who cares to go to hear where the preaching is dull? Some charity boy being asked why the eunuch "went on his way rejoicing," replied that, "It was because Philip had done preaching to him," and I do not doubt that there are some now who from the same cause go on their way rejoicing when the sermon is over. But simple speech, plain talk about Christ, does still win the ear, and if it is but tried, and it really is the Gospel that is preached, there will never be a lack of hearers. See how Sunday night after Sunday night the theatres have been filled when our Brothers have gone there to preach to the working classes the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is false that the working men of London do not care to hear the Gospel; they do care to hear it. Only preach it so that it can be understood, take the velvet from your mouths, and speak plainly, and they will be sure to come to listen. This is always a good sign, and we may fairly expect a harvest when once we get the people to hear. When the fish get round the net, surely some of

them will be taken; and when the furrows lie open, surely he who scatters good seed may have hope that he shall see it spring up. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I am persuaded there never was a time when people were more willing to listen to the Gospel of Christ than now. They will hear it if you only preach it so that it can be understood. Do not, of course, expect them to listen to you if you are not earnest about what you have to say; but if you have something to tell them that is worth their hearing, never fear but what they will give you the hearing. This was another sign of harvest.

But there was yet a better one. Our Savior knew that a harvest was approaching *because the persons who were coming to hear were the very people who seemed the least likely to listen to His Word.* They were Samaritans who were coming. "Oh!" said the Jew, "a Samaritan!" If he merely heard the word, "Samaritan," he turned on his heels and went his way very much in the same style as some of our gentlemen do if they merely hear the word, "rough," which is supposed to be the conglomeration of everything that is horrible; and yet the person who happens to be called a "rough," may be rough in nothing but his garments, and may have as gentle a heart as ever beat beneath broadcloth. But so it is; sometimes the very people come to listen to the Gospel whom you would least expect to see listening to it, and this is a good sign. When the Samaritans will hear, when the giddy multitude are willing to stand crowded together to listen to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, when the working man is not ashamed to come to the House of God to hear Christ preached, and will even stand at a corner of the street and listen to it, it is a good sign, and it is a sign that we see now. The publican and the harlot are willing to receive the Gospel of Jesus, and God blesses them, and they enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. All these are good signs of a coming harvest.

It is, moreover, an omen for good *when we remember the men who have labored before us.* How much of labor has been spent upon this city! How many earnest men have wept and toiled among our teeming masses, and have gone back to their Master with, "Who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Here for three centuries, I may say, since the days of old Hugh Latimer, right on from the time of the preaching at Paul's Cross, there has never been a lack of ministrations of God's Truth in this city of London, and in the surrounding parts of the metropolis. Some of you can almost look back to the days when John Newton was at St. Mary Woolnoth, and can almost remember Romaine at St. Ann's, Blackfriars. When we had among Dissenters such men as Dr. Gill, and afterwards Dr. Rippon, and Abraham Booth, and others who labored and toiled for Christ, and yet, after all met with but little comparative success. There must be some good come from all this. Has all this labor been spent for nothing? Has the ground been watered by the sweat of these men, and have they plowed it, and sown it, and is there never to come a harvest? Our Savior seems to say, "Those Samaritans over yonder, they have the Word of God; they have heard something about it; even the Jews could not keep

the Light of prophecy away from them; other men have prepared them to receive our teachings." And, doubtless, the days that are past have been preparing the population of England to receive the Gospel, and we may hope that when it does come to them it will come with a mighty power, for when the Holy Spirit is pleased to work mightily we shall see something done, the like of which England has never seen before, and which shall be the result of the accumulated labors of many years gone by. We have a right to expect a harvest when we remember what has been done already.

And Beloved, I think it is a sign of some good for the Church of Christ *when there is a stir among the people.* The worst thing, perhaps, for true religion is the stagnation of the human mind. When people are not thoughtful about other things, it is very seldom that you can get them to be thoughtful about religion. It is generally supposed that our country friends, some of whom seem to vegetate rather than to live, and who are not so pressed with business from morning till night as we are in London, must have a great deal of time to give to religion, and that they must, therefore, be the most hopeful of congregations. My country Brothers and Sisters do not confirm the supposition, and for myself—for I preach more in the country than I do in the town, and often spend three or four days a week in addressing country audiences—for myself I must say that glad as I am to address the assembled crowds in a field or anywhere else, I do not find that the supposition that their having less to do makes them think more of Divine things is at all correct. I believe that where the intellect is most exerted, above other things, there is, on the whole, the most hope of sending home some thought about Divine things. It is true that thorns may be a hindrance, and are, but at any rate they prove that the soil will grow something; and I think if I were going to take a farm, I would sooner take one that was overgrown with thistles than one which grew nothing at all, and it is better to lay hold of a man who really does think about something than of one who thinks about nothing at all, and has nothing at all to think about. It was said—I do not know how truly—that a singular apathy had seized the public mind, and that there was nothing that could stir it up. Continually it was said that was an age in which nobody cared for anything, and I think it is pretty nearly the fact. Nobody cared what anyone did or did not do. As long as people could be tolerably easy, they seemed to be pretty well satisfied. If you did not put on the income-tax too heavily, nothing else would much concern the people.

But now it is not so. I think I see the beginning of a stir in the public mind. Even the political stir of the last few days, with all about it which one would deplore, still shows that the public mind is stirring, for there generally comes a waking up about every 20 years or so. People go to sleep for a long time, but all of a sudden they begin to rub their eyes, and to inquire about this, and about that, and about something else. Well now is the time when the spirit is thus awakened to preach the Gospel to that awakened mind. It seems to me that no nobler opportunity could present itself than now. Now is the time when the corners of the streets

should ring with ministers' voices; when the Word of God should be distributed in every house; when you should give away tracts, not such poor tracts as are mostly given away, but tracts with something solid in them, and these should be given away by the millions, for just now men are thoughtful, and let them have the grand revealed reality to think about. I believe on this account, let others think what they will, that there are the signs of a coming harvest.

And, to conclude on this point, it is quite certain that at the present period *the old priest-crafts do not hinder men from hearing the Gospel.* Time was, I dare say, in Sychar and Samaria, when the people dared not have come out to hear Christ; they had to ask some Samaritan Rabbi whether it was proper for them to go to hear the new Prophet. You know in half the country towns in England this is the case. The people there no more dare to think for themselves in religion than they dared to think of old in the days of serfdom and slavery. Squire-craft and priest-craft still tread the people in the country down. But it is not so in London. Nobody here thinks of asking the parish priest where he shall go. We can get at the people; we can bring the Gospel to their doors; there is no dominant priest-craft to keep us back, and I say, Brothers and Sisters, if Martin Luther could have lived in such an age as this, how he would have rejoiced to see it; and if John Bunyan, after lying 12 years in Bedford Jail; if Richard Baxter, and Alleine, and men of that stamp could have lived in days where there is such perfect liberty that every man may hear the Gospel if he cares to hear it, they would have been almost ready to say, "Lord, let Your servants depart in peace, for our eyes have seen Your salvation." This is the hour of the flowing of the tide which taken at its flood leads on to fortune. If the Christian Church does not avail herself of the present crisis, she deserves to have an age of infidelity to make her mourn over her laxity and her indolence; if now the Christian Church dares not bestir herself, now when the minds of men are ready, when their ears are open, when there is nothing to stand between us and the multitude, then I fear she will have cause to repent and mourn in days of darkness and bitterness which will inevitably follow. Up, then, Believers; if the Bible is worthy of your belief proclaim it to others, and proclaim it especially just now. Now is the day and now is the hour, for the fields are already white for the harvest.

II. Supposing all this to be true, we shall now speak of HARVEST NEEDS.

The needs of harvest are, first, *many laborers.* If many souls are to be converted, there must be many to preach to them. If we are to expect a great ingathering, as I think we ought, there must be much energy used and much effort put forth. "Pray you, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into His harvest," and ask Him to be pleased to stir up Christian zeal throughout the whole of Christendom that advantage may be taken of this auspicious hour. You cannot reap without laborers. I saw a reaping machine the other day doing the work very well and very fast, but somehow or other one liked the old-fashioned look of the field when the laborers were in it at work. Certainly there is

no machine that can do this work of soul-reaping. It must be done by men, chosen men, who, filled with the Spirit of God, shall go forth to ingather souls. The first need, then, is more laborers. Who is there among you who will consecrate himself to God? I do not ask for young men for the College just now, we have enough; but I do ask for young men, old men, and all sorts of men, and women, too, to be laborers in the great work of ingathering souls. Many sinners perish, and many saints do nothing. Oh, you who know Christ, be indifferent no longer!

The next thing that is needed is sharp sickles as well as more laborers. A laborer is no good unless he has a sickle, and if he can keep his sickle sharp, so much the better. You must get a hold, dear Friends, of God's Truth. You will do nothing without that Truth of God, and you must have that Truth well understood. You must grind your sickles—you must go to work with such cutting Truths as Justification by Faith, as the Total Ruin of Mankind—the hope that is laid up in the Cross, the energy of the Holy Spirit; and when you know these Truths, and know how to use them, you shall then be made great reapers in the Master's harvest. It is idle to say, "I will go," and then go with no tool in your hands. Get the Truth; get hold of it well, get it sharp and in good order, and who knows, under the blessing of God the Holy Spirit, what you may do!

The next need of harvest is *some close binders.* When the wheat is cut down you must tie it up with sheaves. We want some of you who cannot preach, who cannot use the sickle, to go and gather up the wheat which falls under the sickle when it is used by others. Invite them to come into Church fellowship; talk to them, get them into union with the people of God. And oh, if you happen to be in the Church yourselves, try to keep the Church knit together in love. Bind the sheaves together! We cannot have good harvest work without loving hands to bind the people of God in one.

Then we need beside these *some to take the sheaves home.* The Church of God is the barn, it is the Master's garner here; He has another garner yonder on the hilltop in Heaven, but here we want you to assist in bringing them into the Church of Christ. When God has served them, try, if you can, to get them to practice the ordinances of God, and to be joined with His people. And we need some of you, if you cannot do anything yourselves either in reaping, or binding, or bringing the sheaves home, at least by kind words and loving speeches to *bring refreshments to the reapers.* You can sometimes remind them of the success you know they have had in certain places; you can cheer them when they begin to grow uneasy. You can go to those who are working hard and say, "Be not discouraged; God has blessed you to my soul. God has acknowledged your work in such-and-such cases. Persevere, and God is with you!"

As I look round this congregation I cannot help thinking what a mass of strength there must be here for the Lord's cause if it could but be brought out! You, young man, who are full of ability, who would take the lead in any society into which you choose to enter; oh, young man, how I long for you as a recruit for my Master and to enlist you in His service! If you were a Christian, or if being a Christian, you were all on fire with

love to Christ, what might you not accomplish! I would desire have that matron yonder, with her family about her, to enlist for the Savior. Oh, what a position of usefulness she has! And that great employer of labor there, how influential he is! How a good word from him might be blessed to hundreds of people! And even you who are servants in families, nurses and so on, you may not have so wide a sphere of labor, but you still have your place of influence. Oh, if every talent we possess were but consecrated to Christ! London, you need not be in the dark if all God's lamps which are in you were but lit! O you mighty city! You need not be ignorant of the Gospel if the tongue of every child of God would but tell it out. If we were all enlisted, all made soldiers for Christ, might not this country yet feel the power of Christ? And what are we? A slender few, a handful compared with the masses of our fellow Christians! Would God that they were all baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire, and then we might see such a harvest as would make Heaven itself ring as we shouted our harvest home! I charge you who love the Lord I charge you by the nearness of death, by the shortness of the time in which you can serve your Master, do not one of you be idle! Oh, my dear Hearers, I would almost say if you are members of my Church here, and are doing nothing, get out! Of what service can you be? You are drags on the wheels; you are an impediment to the Church's course; you are like the heavy baggage which impedes the armies of Israel! Do something! In God's name I charge you, do *something*, or else be ashamed of yourselves! Hasn't Christ done much for you? Do you profess to have been bought with His blood? Have you dared to sing—

"I love my God with zeal so great
That I could give Him all"

and are you doing nothing? Some of you drink in the Doctrines of Grace, but if they are, indeed, true to you, show the Grace of the Doctrines by spending and being spent in the Master's cause! These, then, are the needs of harvest.

III. And now, lastly, THE FEARS OF HARVEST.

The farmer sometimes fears that *through lack of laborers he may be obliged to leave the wheat out in the field till it is considerably damaged.* After a certain time the wheat spears out, and there is a loss sustained; birds, also, will feast upon it, and the farmer's gains are going. My dear friends and fellow reapers, this great city is the field that is white for the harvest, and every hour in which men are not saved there are capabilities of usefulness that are falling out, and Satan is running away with opportunities for good. Supposing those souls to be saved in a few years, yet there are all the years between now and then lost for God. I am jealous, not only to have souls saved, but to have them saved while young. Why should Satan have so much of their time? Why should so many years of their influence be thrown into the wrong scale? The wheat, even if you do not get it in before it perishes, is losing part of its value every hour. Oh, should we not be moved by this to take the sickle and go at once to the work?

But there is a worse fear than this, namely, *that some other wheat may remain unharvested and so be destroyed.* It may rot in the place where it grows, and instead of gladdening the farmer, it may be there to become a mere mass of rottenness—the very thing which might have been so useful. Ah, how much of London may be destroyed for lack of laborers to go and take in the harvest! Ah, the millions that never enter a place of worship! I speak within bounds, for even if they all wished to enter, there is hardly room for one million out of three, and a great mass never come at all—but how few of us there are who go after them! They perish, my Brothers and Sisters, they perish! They perish with an overwhelming destruction; you know how they perish; you know how you were once on the brink of perishing, and how Divine Mercy snatched you from it. You have read in that old Book of everlasting destruction which is the portion of the men who die unwashed in the blood, and unforgiven. I charge you, if you would not see souls lost, rise, and with the sickle get to the harvest, for meanwhile do you not know that there are other reapers at work? If the Christian does not work, there are others who will labor. If the Truth of God does not now spread among the masses, *error* is spreading. You cannot silence the tongue of infidelity if you shut your own mouth. You cannot stop the voice of priest-craft if you are quiet yourselves. You know that the messengers of Satan are busy. As Hugh Latimer said, "The busiest bishop in England is the devil; he is always traveling up and down his diocese; he neither neglects town nor village, nor hamlet, nor so much as one of those who live in his see. He is seeking both by night and by day the ruin of souls." Other hands—they are gathering the harvest—but it belongs to your Master, and will you endure it, will you endure it? You servants of Christ, will you allow it? Shall the harvest be taken away? No, by the love you bear your Master, take the prey from the mighty.

And now, lastly, perhaps the most solemn reflection is, that *whether we gather in the harvest or not, there is a reaper who is silently gathering it every hour.* Just now it is whispered that he is sharpening his sickle. That reaper is DEATH! You may look upon this great city as the harvest field, and every week the bills of mortality tell us how steadily and how surely the scythe of Death moves to and fro, and how a lane is made through our population, and those who were once living men are taken like sheaves to the garner, taken to the graveyard and laid aside. You cannot stop their dying, but oh, that God might help you to stop their being damned! You cannot stop the breath from going out of their bodies, but oh, if the Gospel could but stop their souls from going down to destruction! It can do it, and nothing else can take its place. Just now this cholera has come. There can be little doubt, I suppose, about it being here already in some considerable force, and probably it may be worse. The Christian cannot dread it, he has nothing to lose, and everything to gain. Still, for the sake of others he may well pray that God would avert His hand and not let His anger burn. But since it is coming, I think it ought to be a motive for active exertion. If there ever is a time when the mind is sensitive it is when death is abroad. I remember when

first I came to London how anxiously people listened to the Gospel, for the cholera was raging terribly. There was little scoffing then. All day and sometimes all night long I went about from house to house and saw men and women dying, and oh, how glad they were to see one's face, and when many were afraid to enter their houses for fear of disease, we who had no fear about such things found ourselves most gladly listened to when we spoke of Christ and of Divine things.

And now, again, is the minister's time; now is the time for all of you who love souls. You may see men more alarmed than now, I hope they may not be; I pray to God that they may not be; but if they should, avail yourselves of it. You have the balm of Gilead—when their wounds smart, pour it in. You know of Him who died to save, tell them of Him. Lift high the Cross before their eyes. Tell them that God became Man that man might be lifted up to God. Tell them of Calvary, and its groans, and cries, and sweat of blood. Tell them of Jesus hanging on the Cross to save sinners. Tell them that there is life for a look at the Crucified One. Tell them that He is able to save to the uttermost all them who come unto God by Him. Tell them that He is able to save at the eleventh hour, and to say to the dying thief, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise."

Oh, dear Hearers, while I am exhorting you who are Christians to look after strangers, I may well ask you to look over those who are sitting in the pews with you, for there are some of you who, if you were to die tonight—if, instead of going down yonder steps beneath the columns you were to die in your seats, where would your souls go? If you reached your home and staggered into your bed, and found it your tomb, what would be your eternal fate? Will not conscience tell you that you could not plead a Savior's blood? You have never trusted it. You cannot expect a living Savior to meet you in a dying moment, for you have never loved Him. Oh, may God's Grace make you love Him now tonight! Sinner, look to Jesus, and you shall be saved. Trust Christ now; trust Him only; trust Him wholly; trust Him earnestly; and you shall rejoice, even tonight, and you shall be a part of that wheat which is white already unto harvest.

Oh, my Hearers, I am concerned for your souls, I would gladly reap, myself, and bind up some sheaves to be carried into our earthly sheltering place in prospect of our heavenly home. I cannot bear the thought that any of you should ever be bound in bundles to be burned! What? Will any of you be lost, and be borne into the flame which never can be quenched? It must not be. Turn! Turn! Why will you die? Are there any reasons you can urge for your choice when you select companionship with sinners here and devils hereafter, and despise the Gospel of Salvation, and reject the overtures of Grace? There are none! You know you are wrong! You are persuaded that your present position is false, and you are not without some dread of the result at last. Are there not at times fears which sting like serpents, and poison your peace of mind so that you would gladly be free from them if you could? Well, listen to me, or rather listen to God's Word as spoken by me—"Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I speak of no untried remedy, I have myself tasted it; I am a witness of the

efficacy and power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin. I am surrounded by thousands who are all so many proofs of its value and unchanging might—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

He is waiting to be gracious, near at hand, and not afar off. There are, in some parts of the Continent where I have traveled, places so sparsely inhabited and the people so poor, that no medical man resides in the district. And in such cases, if anyone falls sick, he must write to the nearest wayside inn to have a notice put up that if any doctor or medical man is passing by, they would be glad if he would in kindness stay and pay them a visit, so as to give them a chance of being healed, if human help can avail in their case. Should no physician pass that way, then the man must die, there is no help for him. The ignorance of his friends and their poverty cannot help him, he must go to his grave. But here, my dear Hearers, is the difference in your case. The Physician knocks at your door, and tells you of your disease, explains to you the remedy, assures you of a complete and of an immediate cure. And you—oh madness and unspeakable folly!—you hesitate to welcome Him, and you reject, it may be, all His offered care. Then you must perish, for your ignorance and poverty are such that no help of man can avail. You cannot effect your own cure, and therefore you will go down to the pit of Hell with your blood upon your own head. May this folly soon cease, and you be inclined to listen to Him whose touch gives health, yes, life from the dead! In His name I proclaim salvation; look, then, to Him; believe, and Life Everlasting shall be yours.

May God Almighty bless you, and may we meet in Heaven. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 4.

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HEAVENLY GEOMETRY
NO. 707

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 19, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God."
Ephesians 3:16-19.

THIS Divine measurement is an art of the most desirable kind, as appears from its being the object of most earnest Apostolic prayers. Paul was not content to travail in birth for souls, and to become their spiritual parent, but he afterwards exercised the functions of a nursing father, tenderly caring for the souls to whom he had been blessed, and desiring to see them growing up in the faith to the ripeness of spiritual maturity. He was parent, nurse, and tutor—in fact he became all things, as far as lay within his power, to his spiritual children. Paul's wise tenderness leads us to an assured confidence that the blessing, to pray for which he suspended his writing of so important an Epistle, must have been of the very highest value. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He felt that it was desirable to the very last degree that the saints should not only know themselves to be the objects of Divine Favor, but should be well acquainted with its sublime qualities and perfections, which he here compares to a fourfold measurement. In this measurement may you and I be skilled. If we know nothing of mathematics, may we be well-tutored scholars in this spiritual geometry, and be able to comprehend the breadths and lengths of Jesus' precious Love.

It may be well at the outset to call your attention to *the previous education which the Apostle desires for the saints as a preliminary to their measurement of Divine Love;* then *the measurement itself* which he desires them to practice; and lastly, *the practical results* which would be sure to follow from their being able to comprehend the Love of Christ Jesus our Lord.

I. Like a wise and enlightened teacher, Paul desires for the saints that they should receive THAT PREVIOUS EDUCATION WHICH IS NECESSARY BEFORE THEY WILL BE ABLE TO ENTER UPON SUCH A SCIENCE AS THE MEASUREMENT OF CHRIST'S LOVE.

When lads go to school they are not at first put to study algebra, nor are they sent out to make a trigonometrical survey of a county. The schoolmaster knows that they must have a rudimentary knowledge of arithmetic, or else to teach them algebra would be a waste of time, and that they must have some acquaintance with common geometry, or it would be absurd to instruct them in surveying. He therefore begins with the elementary information, and when they have learned simpler matters they are ready for the more difficult studies. They climb the steps of the door of Science, and then they are introduced to her temple. The Apostle Paul does not propose that the new convert should at once be able to measure the breadth and length and depth and height of the Love of Christ; he knows that this is not within the range of his infant mind; for the new-born spirit has a time of growth to go through before it can enter into the deep things of God. We must learn our alphabet at the dame's school of repentance and faith, and study the syntax of Christian holiness at the grammar school of experience before we can enter the university of full assurance, and obtain a fellowship among those who comprehend the science of Christ Crucified in its highest degree. It is not for the mere baby to compute distances or to fathom depths, this is work for men; the child will think as a child and understand as a child until instruction and years have developed his powers and fitted him for more sublime and manly thought.

If you will kindly refer to the text you will see what this previous education is which the Apostle desired for the saints. It is very fully described in three parts. First, *he desired that their spiritual faculties might be strengthened,* for he prays that they might be "strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man." He does not so much intend that they may be strengthened in their mental faculties as in their spiritual capacities, to which he refers by the term, *inner man.* The schoolmaster knows that the boy's mind must be strengthened, that his understanding must be exercised, his discernment must be developed, and his memory must be rendered capacious before he may enter upon superior studies; and the Apostle knows that our spiritual faculties must undergo the same kind of development; that our faith, for instance, must be unwavering, that our love must become fervent, that our hope must be bright, that our joy must be increased, and then, but not till then, we shall be able to comprehend the length and breadth of Divine Love. We

are to be strengthened in the inner man *by the Spirit of God;* and who can strengthen as He strengthens? When the Divine Omnipotence pours its renewing energy into our poor fainting weakness, then we grow strong indeed; when the Divine Intelligence enlightens our pitiful ignorance, then we grow truly wise; when the Divine Infinity enlarges and expands our narrow capacities to receive the Truth of God, then are we blessedly elevated to otherwise unattainable points of blissful knowledge. Oh the blessedness of being strengthened of the Holy Spirit! How spiritually strong do we become when He infuses His might into us! But the Spirit of God works by means, and therefore we may expect to have our spiritual faculties strengthened by the study of the Word, by communion with Christ, by listening to the earnest exhortations of our Brethren, by experience, by prayer, and by all other hallowed exertions which Divine Grace has ordained to be the channels of communication between the heirs of the Kingdom and the Comforter who abides with them forever.

Our strength to learn with must come from God the Holy Spirit. I suppose the expression, "strengthened *with might,"* is meant to refer to an eminent measure of strength. The Christian will get to Heaven should he have only strength as a grain of mustard seed. Through many difficulties the work of faith, though almost water-logged, will be tugged into the harbor, for Christ is on board and secures her safety; but it is not desirable that we should thus struggle into Eternal Life; it is far more to be hoped that our young faculties may come to healthy and vigorous manhood, so that, to return to our former metaphor, our vessel, staunch and in good trim, with her sails well filled, and her flags flying right gallantly, having overcome every storm, may have an abundant entrance into the desired haven. Brothers and Sisters, I trust you are not among those who think it quite enough to be barely alive unto God; I trust that you wish to be not only babes in the family, but young men and fathers in the household; and that you aspire to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit with might, that you may become powerful Christians—Christians able to enter into the soul and marrow of Divine things, and to discern between things that differ. I would have you not mere milk-fed infants, but men and women able to crack the nuts of the Gospel, and to digest the strong meat, because by reason of years you have had all your senses exercised. Why should we forever be obliged to lay again the foundations? Why not press onward and upward in heavenly attainments as men do in human learning? Why must our heads always wear the dunce's cap, and our backs smart with the fool's rod? The Holy Spirit works in us to this very end that we may be no more mere children, but well-taught Christians of God! Oh grieve Him not, but be

willing to be taught! This was the objective of the Apostle's prayers, and of our loving anxieties. Remember, Beloved, that none of you will be able to comprehend the measurement of the Love of Christ, unless first of all the Holy Spirit our Instructor shall have baptized your spiritual powers with His sacred influences, and so have strengthened you with might in that refined and newly created part of your being which is called the inner man, because it is your truest, most precious, most secret, most vital, most essential self.

A second part of this preliminary education is mentioned by our Apostle in the next sentence—"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." *He desires that the Object of study may be evermore before them.* A good tutor not only wishes his scholar may have a disciplined mind able to grapple with the subject, but he endeavors to keep the subject always before him; for in order to attain to any proficiency in a science the mind must be abstracted from all other thoughts, and continually exercised with the chosen theme. You will never find a man preeminent in astronomy unless astronomy has become the lord of his mind, and holds a sway over his mind even in his dreams. The anatomist must be bound to nerves, and bones, and blood vessels, as the galley slave is bound to the oar, or he will never master his subject. The botanist must be enamored of every flower, and wedded to every plant, or the fields will utterly baffle him. "Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeks and intermeddles with all wisdom." Solomon knew what he wrote when he said, "Separated himself," for without separation or abstraction, there can be no progress. Now, the Apostle desires that we who are Believers, our faculties being strengthened, may have the Person of Jesus constantly before us to inflame our love, and so increase our knowledge. See how near he would have Jesus be! "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." You cannot get a subject closer to you than to have it on the inner side of the eyes; that is to say, in the heart itself. The astronomer cannot always see the stars because they are far away, and outside of him; but our Star shines in the Heaven of our hearts forever. The botanist must find his flowers in their seasons, but our Plant of Renown blooms in our souls all the year round. We carry the instruments of our saintly art, and the Object of our devout contemplation within ourselves. As a scholar carries in his pocket a small edition of his favorite classic, so do we carry Christ in our hearts; what if I say we bear about with us a heart edition of the Libra Crucis, the Book of the Cross? Renewed hearts need no other library than themselves, for Jesus, in our inmost spirits, is library enough. If we knew more fully by experience the meaning of, "Christ in you the hope of

glory," our Heaven-taught affections, which are the best part of our inner man, might be continually exercised upon the Person, the work, and the Love of our dear Redeemer. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts."

Brothers and Sisters, it will be to small profit that we shall talk to you about the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the Love of Christ unless there is in your soul a devout longing ambition to set the Lord Jesus always before you, as the frequent, if not, the constant Subject of your meditation. No progress to any extent is to be made in the school of the Cross unless you separate yourself, and give yourself wholly to this. It must be the one great business of your life, to know Him and the power of His Resurrection. I would to God that we were all entered as diligent scholars in Jesus' College, students of Corpus Christi, or the Body of Christ, resolved to attain unto a good degree in the learning of the Cross, a learning which angels desire to understand; but to do this the heart must be full of Jesus, welling up with His Love, flaming with it, overrunning with it; and therefore the Apostle prays, "that Christ may *dwell* in your hearts." Observe the words, *"that He may dwell"*—not that He may call upon you sometimes, as a casual visitor enters into a house and tarries for a night, but that He may dwell, that Christ may take up His abode in your hearts, that the Lord Jesus may become the Lord and Tenant of your inmost being, never more to go out, but to dwell there world without end. Observe, too, the words—that He may dwell in *your hearts,* that best room of the house of manhood; not in your thoughts alone, but in your affections; not merely have Him in your *minds*, but have Him in your loves.

Paul wants you to have a love to Christ of a most abiding character, not a love that flames up under an earnest sermon, and then dies out into the darkness of a few embers, but a constant flame, the abiding of Jesus' Love in your hearts, both day and night, like the flame upon the altar which never went out. This cannot be accomplished except by faith. Faith must be strong, or love will not be fervent; the root of the flower must be healthy, or we cannot expect the bloom to be sweet. Faith is the lily's root, and love is the lily's bloom. Now Jesus cannot be in your heart's love except you have a firm hold of Him by your heart's faith; and, therefore, Paul prays that you may always trust Christ, that you may always love Him. Thus, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus, being constantly brought under your heart's attention, you are likely to be able to comprehend the measurement of His Love which would otherwise be impossible for you to do.

The Apostle prays further *that they may have practical exercise in the art of holy love*—"that *you*, being rooted and grounded in love." Every

experienced tutor knows that it is greatly helpful to the student to exercise him in his chosen pursuit upon some lower and inferior branch of it, so as to lead him gradually to the higher points of it. If for instance, he means him to understand the surveying of estates, he bids him measure a field containing an acre or two. If he means him to map out a country, he sets him first to make a plan of a neighboring field or a farm. The Apostle acts upon the same method. "That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend the breadth and length of the love of Christ." Having the love of Jesus in you, possessed with love to Christ, you will be practiced in the exercise of love, and so will understand the Love which fills the Savior. You will learn to do business upon the greater waters of the Redeemer's Infinite Love to His people as you sail upon the stream of your love to Him.

Two expressions are used—"rooted," like a living tree which lays hold upon the soil, twists itself round the rocks, and cannot be upturned—"grounded," like a building which has been settled, as a whole, and will never show any cracks or flaws in the future through failures in the foundation. The Apostle wishes us to be rooted and grounded in love, a vital union being established between our souls and Jesus, so that we love Him because He first loved us; and also a union of trust by which we rest upon Jesus as the stones of a wall are settled upon the foundation. He would have us thus by love and by faith to be knit to Christ, and to be firm, and fast, and fixed, and immovable in our loving attachment to Him.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, you cannot know Christ's Love to you, to any great extent, except you thus love Him. You must love, or you cannot comprehend love. A man who has never felt benevolence towards his fellow creatures—and there are some such monsters—sneers and laughs at those who can give their money to the poor or to the sick. He thinks such persons fools at least, if not absolutely mad. "Ah," said one, "I know how to make money," and then he added significantly, clenching his fist, "and I know what some people do not know; I know how to take care of it, too." There are some benevolent people who do not know how to take care of it in that sense, but they know how to do good with it, and such people will never be understood by the mean money-grubbing wretch who pollutes the earth he lives upon. As though he were a very Solomon, and benevolent men were idiots, he mutters conceitedly, "Well, I cannot understand it; it is stupidity to give away your hard-earned money." Of course it is to him; he cannot comprehend it, and so the Love of Jesus Christ cannot be comprehended by a man who does not love. If you have no love to souls, you will not understand why Jesus wept over

Jerusalem; it will puzzle you mightily; you will look to Matthew Henry, and Scott, and Gill, and be more puzzled still; but if you love the souls of men, you will find no difficulty in the passage at all, for you will weep over sinners, too. If you do not love the saints, you will wonder how Jesus can love them; but when you have once felt an unselfish Christ-like love to your fellow men, the riddle will be answered. He who circumnavigated the world began by sailing upon brooks and mill ponds, and he who would measure the breadths and lengths of Jesus' Love must feel his own soul filled with affection for his Lord.

Paul would have us, then, with developed faculties, with the Subject in our hearts, and with an exercise of love on our part, prepared to enter upon the science. My Brothers and Sisters, when I consider what a science it is, the science of the Love of Christ, the most masterly of all knowledge, too deep for the archangel's intellect, the wonder of all the hosts of Heaven—when I consider that the greatest human minds have confessed themselves to be altogether lost in the contemplation, and have had to say, "Oh the depths! Oh the depths!" I do not wonder at all that the Apostle, instead of praying for us that we might immediately enter upon the study of it, first prays that we may be gratified to learn it; for as some sciences, if taught to an illiterate man, would be only taught in their letter, but could not be learned in their spirit for lack of capacity to receive them, so the love of Jesus Christ in its length, and breadth, and depth, and height—if it could be taught in the letter of it to an untrained Believer, would be, in a great measure, lost upon him—he would not be deriving true knowledge from it. He would observe the letter, but the inward spirit he would not be able to understand. Beloved, if you are to win the precious attainment of the knowledge of Christ's Love in its depth and breadth, you must pray that God would strengthen your spiritual powers, you must plead that Jesus may abide in your souls, and that your love to Him may become vigorous and all-absorbing, for only then can you drink deeply into the unutterable and Infinite Love of Jesus Christ.

II. We now come to consider more closely the SCIENCE OF HEAVENLY MEASUREMENT ITSELF.

According to the text, we have a solid body to deal with, for we are to measure its breadth and length, and depth, and height. This cubical measurement—for it lies foursquare, like the New Jerusalem—proves the reality of the body to be measured. Alas, to a great many religious people the Love of Jesus is not a solid substantial thing at all—it is a beautiful fiction, a sentimental belief, a formal theory, but to Paul it was a real, substantial, measurable fact; he had considered it this way, and that

way, and the other way, and it was evidently real to him, whatever it might be to others. No one knows the Love of Christ at all if he does not know it to be real, and no one has felt it in his soul at all unless it becomes so real as to constrain him and move him into actual activity. We have a word which we sometimes use in a sense which I believe is not correct according to the dictionary; I mean the word "realize." That word has been forced into the language of Christian experience, and can never be forced out again; we must realize, or make real to our hearts the Love of Christ. That is just what I think the Apostle did—he made real to himself the Love of his Master and Lord. It was not to him a surface theory, which might have breadth, but could not have depth; or a mere narrow statement with length, but no breadth; it was a thing as firm and solid as anything in the world. It is true the Love of Jesus is not material and earthly so as to be seen and handled, but it is even more substantial than if it were a thing to be seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, and the things which are not seen are eternal. To the carnal man the visible is real, and the invisible a mere dream; but to the spiritual man things are reversed, the visible is the shadow and the invisible the substance. May you be such men and women, dear Friends, all of you!

The Apostle desires that when the Love of Christ becomes to us a solid reality we may have close communion with it. You may measure the breadth and length of a thing at a great distance, but you cannot very well measure its depth without drawing near to it. What a holy familiarity with Jesus do the words imply when we come to measurements of all kinds! What condescension is this which allows the Sacred Heart to be fathomed like a sea, and to be measured as a field! Shall the Infinite thus bow itself to man? Shall man refuse to commune with such condescending Love? Should it not be our deep desire to obtain and to retain the most intimate acquaintance with the thrice-blessed Love of Jesus, so as not only to measure it in one form, but in all forms, that in every way in which the Love of Christ may be regarded, from above or from below, we may be well acquainted with it. We would know the inmost secrets of the Redeemer's Love; its doings and sacrifices which are the apparent part of it—its breadth, its counsels and its plans—its depth, the secret part of it—its length, its endurance and patience—its height its triumphs and glories. We would know all that is knowable, for when we know all that has been learned by mortals, there is still something that is beyond our view, and hence the Apostle adds, "to know the love of Christ, *which passes knowledge."*

Let me come to the very words of our text, and point out to you *their order.* The first objective of the Christian's knowledge should be *the breadth* of the Savior's Love. I know a certain school of Christians who have need to study this point, for they have a very narrow idea of the Lord's loving kindness. They cannot be brought by any means to conceive of it as being broad; to them it is no wider than a razor's edge. They conceive of Divine Love as a very narrow stream; they have never seen it to be a mighty, flowing, abounding, and rejoicing river, such as it really is. The breadth of Christ's Love, dear Friends, we are told in Scripture, is such that it extends to all ranks and races of mankind—not to the Jew only, but also to the Gentile. The love of Jesus Christ does not surround our favored island alone, but like the ocean it washes every shore. The Love of Jesus Christ has been extended to kings upon their thrones, but with equal and more frequent bounty to the slaves in their dungeons. In some respects the Love of Jesus comes to every man, for there is not a man or woman born who does not owe something to the benevolence of God through the Love of Jesus. The respite which keeps the sinner out of Hell is no doubt the result of that Love which said, "Spare it yet a little longer, till I dig about it and fertilize it, and if it brings forth fruit, well." Beloved, the Benevolent Love of Jesus is more extended than the lines of His Electing Love, for we hear Him saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the Prophets, and stones them who are sent unto you; how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen does gather her brood under her wings, and you would not." That is not the Love which beams resplendently upon His chosen, but it is true Love for all that; Pitying and Benevolent Love which revealed itself in honest tears of grief. I would not have you omit this view of the subject when you are measuring its breadth, although we still feel that in its utmost depth and fullness that Love flows only to His people.

Beloved, consider the breadth of special Love. We are very apt to conceive the number of God's Elect to be but few. Who told us that? When the Savior was asked, "Lord, are there few who shall be saved?" He never answered that question, but He said, "Strive to enter into the strait gate," as though He had said, "Whether there are many or not, you strive to the utmost to enter in." I hope that the multitude of the chosen will far exceed the number of the lost. It has always seemed to me that if in all things Christ will have the pre-eminence, He will not allow the powers of darkness to drag away the major part of the human race; but on the contrary, a multitude that no man can number, so many as the stars in Heaven for multitude, and like the sands upon the seashore are innumerable, shall be the fruit of His suffering which shall make Him to

see of the travail of His soul, and to be satisfied. It is well to have as broad ideas of the Love of Christ as Scripture will permit us, and there I trust we shall be content to stay.

But, Brothers and Sisters, we get the best idea of the breadth of Christ's Love when we behold it flowing to our lost and guilty selves—I never thought it so broad a stream till I found that it reached to me, even to me. I feared that I was far away from its blessed margin, but the river swelled and overflowed its banks until at last it washed me, even me. How broad it must have been to have reached to some here present who had wandered into the plains of sin, and had followed after their own wanton devices, and yet the breadth of the river embraced even them. You may measure the breadth of it by the sins which it covers. When a river is overflowing, you tell how broad it must be by the little hillocks and the treetops, which you can see in it. You may see how broad is the Love of Christ, that it reaches to such offenses as these—it reaches to theft, to drunkenness, to blasphemy, to fornication, to adultery, to murder. The Savior's measurement of it is this, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." There is a boundary, it stops at one sin which is unto death, but of that we know nothing and I trust we never may; but with that one exception broad as sin is, so broad is this mighty Love of Christ which covers it all.

Do you not think, however, that we most of us fail to see the breadth of Christ's Love in matters of Providence? You know what is meant by the breadth of a man's mind, the breadth of his thought, when he can consider a great many subjects at once, when he has the ability to accomplish many designs and many purposes with one stroke. Now, the breadth of the Savior's Love is just this—there is no part of His people's interests which He does not consider, and there is nothing which concerns their welfare which is not important to Him. Not merely does He think of you, Believer, as an immortal being, but as a mortal being, too. Do not deny it or doubt it; the very hairs of your head are all numbered. There is nothing that concerns His Beloved that is unimportant to our Lord. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way." It were a sad thing for us if this river of Love did not cover all our concerns, for what mischief might be worked for us in that part of our business which did not come under our gracious Lord's inspection! Oh, Believer, rest assured that the heart of Jesus concerns itself about your meaner affairs; your buying and selling He cares for; your counter and counting-house, your ships and your carts and your horses, and your barley, and your wheat, and your hay, and your straw; your children, your little ones, and everything which concerns you concerns

Him, also. The breadth of His tender Love is such that you may go to Him in all matters; for in all your afflictions He is afflicted, and like as a father pities his children, so does He pity you.

This invites us to look at the breadth of the Savior's Love under a still greater aspect. All the concerns of all His saints that have ever lived or ever shall live, are all borne upon the broad bosom of the Son of God. Oh what a heart His is, that does not merely comprehend the persons of His people, but comprehends the diverse and innumerable concerns of all those persons! Alexander, it is said, knew the names of his soldiers, but Alexander could not think of every soldier in every tent, and of all the business of every soldier; but this the Love of Christ does—He thinks of all the cares and all the troubles and all the joys present and to come of every blood-bought one. Now see, dear Friend, if you can measure the breadth of the Love of Christ. You have a task before you which you will not yet accomplish, and if you could there would still remain another breadth, namely, that breadth measured by the gifts which He brings. Think of what He has brought you! He has brought you Justification, yes, Adoption, Sanctification, Eternal Life. The riches of His goodness are unsearchable, you shall never be able to tell them out or even conceive them. Oh the breadth of the love of Christ!

And yet you see this is merely a beginning because the breadth and measurement is but surface work. This is for you youngsters to think about, but yet I wish some of the elder Christians would. Some of them seem to be so taken up with the height and length that they deny the breadth, and you would think from hearing them preach that Christ came into the world to save half-a-dozen, and that they were five of them; at least that nobody else could go to Heaven except such as they were, who swore by their Shibboleth and agreed in every jot and tittle with their creed. Away with their narrowness! There will be more in Heaven than we expect to see there by a long way—and there will be some there with whom we had very little comfortable fellowship on earth who had fellowship with Christ, and who are therefore taken to dwell with Him forever.

The next object of study is the *length* of Christ's Love. It has been well observed, that if Christ had thought upon His people for ten minutes it would have been a wonderful condescension; in fact it would have been a thing to sing of in Heaven that Christ Jesus did once think upon us, because we are not worthy of a minute of God's thoughts. Now just try if you can to grasp the thought, He has thought upon His people as long as He has existed! Is it not eternal Love, and what is longer than that? "I have loved you with an everlasting love." As long, then, with Deity itself is

the Love of Deity towards its chosen ones. God did love us in His Son long before the world began. If an angel were to start from today with the design of finding out when God's Love began, he would doubtless fly on till he lingered at the Cross. "Here," he would say, "here is the Fountain, here is the source of it all." But he would be reminded that, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Then there was a Love *before* the giving of His Son. He would fly onward till he paused at Isaiah's day and heard of God's Love in the prophecy that the Son of Man should bear the iniquity of His people. He would say, "Surely it begins here!" But saints would remind him of yet older words of comfort, and he would fly on till he stopped outside of the Garden of Eden and heard the Lord say, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." "Surely," he would say, "it began here." But Divinely instructed he would go back yet further, even to the eternal councils where first of all salvation was planned and contrived in the cabinets of Wisdom before the world was. He would have to go back, back, back, till Creation had vanished, till there remained not a shred of existence except the absolute self-existent Deity, and then in the Eternal Mind he would see thoughts of Love toward a people to be formed for Himself. This knowledge of the length of Love does not always come to Christians early in their history. Some of my dear Brothers and Sisters know the breadth of Christ's love right well, but they seem as if they never would learn its *length*.

Some of our Arminian friends know a great deal about the breadth of it, and can preach very sweetly upon it, too, and I thank God they can, for they are the means of bringing in many converts who might not be brought in if it were not for their broad preaching. Yes, dear Brothers and Sisters, it may be as broad as you like, but it must be long, too. You must not preach a Love that begins when you begin, but a Love which is before you—a causeless Love which is the *cause* and not the effect of your love—a Love which knows no beginning, but is ancient as the Throne of Deity. This Love is not only without beginning but it is without pause. There is never a moment when Jesus ceases to love His people. The Love of Jesus knows nothing of suspended animation. There are some rivers in Australia which lose themselves, and for miles along their bed you find nothing but dry stones at certain seasons of the year. It is never so with the Love of Christ—it is long, and without a break from beginning to end; it is a chain without a single broken or feeble link. The Love of Jesus possesses an eternal existence in which there is not a single intermission, nor even a sign of failure or hint of an end. Here let us rejoice without trembling. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end." We lean our heads upon this pillow

and we sleep right sweetly there—"He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." "He said, I am God, I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever." "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." There are no ifs and buts in this circle of Divine Grace. All is as certain as the Throne of God. Our conquering Captain shall bring many sons to Glory, and His shall be the praise.

Dear Friends, we studiously consider the length of this Love of Christ, but I am persuaded, study it as we may, we shall never completely grasp it. It is so long that your old age cannot wear it out, so long that your continual tribulations cannot exhaust it, your successive temptations shall not drain it dry—like Eternity itself it knows no bounds.

My time has fled, and I am only in the middle of my subject, and therefore the rest of the discourse must be in brief hints and hurried sentences. The *depth* of the Love of Jesus! Consider it as stooping to look upon such an insignificant creature as man! View the depth of that Love in receiving such sinful creatures into His embrace! What a depth is seen when the Lord Jesus Christ selects some guilty wretch who has openly broken the laws of his country, and subjected himself to punishment from his fellow men, and yet the Lord Jesus freely pardons him when he repents of sin, and receives Him into his heart's Love! The depth of this river of Love is best seen, however, in the fact that Jesus became a Man, Deity became Incarnate! The Lord of Angels slept upon a woman's breast! Nor is this all. Being a Man, He bears our sorrows, goes through the world weary, and poor, and patient; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Nor is this all—He bears our sins. The iniquities of His people, like a huge load, are laid upon His shoulders, and He stands as their Substitute. Even yet it is not enough, for He bears our punishment, and on the bloody tree He bows His head, and is obedient even unto death. Hell's waves rolled over Him, the eternal wrath of God spent itself upon His blessed head; He was made lower than the angels, but He stooped lower still, till He called himself a worm and no man. Oh the depth of the agony of Jesus smarting for sin! O Sinner! You cannot have gone too deep for Christ's Love to reach you. O Backslider! You cannot have sinned too foully for forgiveness. You who have gone beyond conception in sin, you who have practiced the foulest and most devilish of sins, the

depth of Christ's Love is still deeper, and He is able to save even to the uttermost.

Think next of the *height* of the Master's Love. You see it is put last, as the highest point of learning. There are some who have advanced as far as to understand somewhat of the depths, who do not know the full dignity and glory of an heir of Heaven, and have felt but little of the power of His ascension. Why, the Love of Jesus, even in this present life, is a height unspeakable, for has it not lifted us up to become sons of God? "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." It has given us an earnest of the inheritance, it has made us anticipate the hour when we shall dwell with the angels of light; it tells us that our conversation is in Heaven, and that our life is hid with Christ in God. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, the height of this Love will be best seen in a future state. You shall be borne up to dwell with Christ in the clouds when the world is in a blaze, and when the Judgment is passed you shall be carried by angels' wings up to the seventh Heaven where God dwells. Oh the breadth, the length, the depth, the height! To sum up what we have said in four words—for breadth the love of Jesus is *immensity*, for length it is *eternity*, for depth it is *immeasurability,* and for height it is *infinity*. O Christian, may the Holy Spirit instruct you in these great things!

III. Lastly, two or three words. If it shall be our privilege to study this science and to master it, it will still be over and above us, for it passes all knowledge. But there will flow the following PRACTICAL RESULTS. We shall *be filled with all the fullness of God.*

Brothers and Sisters, do try and get hold of this marvelous expression when you are alone in meditation. Set it before you as a great mystery to be dived into. "Filled with all the fullness of God." What can it mean? Is it to have God within you; God dwelling in your inmost spirit; it is this, but more. "Filled with God"—to hold as much of God as your nature can hold; what a thought! "Filled with God," even this is not all. "Filled with *the fullness* of God." The fullness of His Love and Grace, and Power, and Holiness can come to dwell in you; but this is not all that the verse speaks of, for it is written, "filled with *all* the fullness of God." What a transcendent expression! Here we have not only an indwelling God, but that God in the utmost fullness of His Godhead filling and overflowing the whole soul with His fullness. I cannot help borrowing an illustration from a friend who took up a bottle by the seashore, filled it full of seawater, corked it down, and then threw it into the sea. "Now," he said, "there it is, there is the sea in the bottle, and there is the bottle in the sea." It is full to fullness, and then, in a still greater fullness. There is my

soul with God in it, and my soul in God; the fullness of God in me as much as I can hold, and then myself in the fullness of God. The illustration gives one as much of the text as one knows how to convey; ourselves swallowed up in the all-absorbing abyss of the Love of God, and that same Love of God flowing into all the parts and powers of our soul till we are as full of God as man can hold. Then shall we show that love in our lives, in our prayers, in our preaching, in everything that we do; we shall manifest not only that we have been with Jesus, but that we have Jesus dwelling in us, filling us right full with His loving, sanctifying, elevating Presence.

Beloved, if we shall reach the point indicated in the text, we shall then begin to imitate the Love of God in its four aspects. I am sure if we shall ever learn the breadth of Christ's Love our love will grow broad; we shall no longer confine our love to our own Church, but shall care for all the Churches of God. We shall feel an affection not only for Christians of our own name, but to Christians of all names. Then our love will gain length also. We shall love Christ so that we cannot leave off loving Him. We shall persevere in love, we shall abide in His Love as He abides in it. We shall constantly have the flame of our love going up to Heaven. And then our love will acquire depth. We shall be humbled on account of our own sinfulness, we shall sink lower and lower in our own esteem, and our love will become deeper and more grounded as it descends more fully into the core of our nature. And then love will climb the heights. We shall forget the world and the cares of it; we shall become Christians who lie no longer among the pots, but who have received the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. We shall attain to such a height in our love, that we shall scale the mountaintops of the promises, and with our foreheads bathed in the sunlight shall look down upon the world that still lies in darkness, and rejoice that we are made heirs of the Light of God; till our love mounting to Heaven shall there be in its height as we appear before the Great White Throne, and cast our crowns with many a song before Him who loved us, with a breadth, and length, and depth, and height of Love that even in Heaven shall surpass all measurement! God bless you, dear Friends, with this Love, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EPHESIANS 3.

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THE BLOOD OF ABEL AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS
NO. 708

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1866.

"And He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.'"
Genesis 4:10.

"And to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel."
Hebrews 12:24.

THE first shedding of human blood was a very terrible experiment. Whether Cain's murderous blow was premeditated or not, the sight of a bleeding human corpse must have been a terrible novelty to him. He had not been hardened by reading details of warfare, or listening to tales of murder; killing and slaying were new terrors to mankind, and he who was the ringleader in such violence must have been filled with mingled astonishment at the result of his blow, and apprehension as to its consequences. I think I see him standing there by the corpse, for a moment stiff with fear, awe-struck at the sight of blood. Will the skies dart malignant fires upon him? Will the earth produce speedy avengers from her astonished soil? What questions must have flashed through the murderer's mind! But lo, the warm lifeblood flows in a crimson stream upon the earth, and some ghastly comfort arises to the mind of the guilty wretch as he observes the earth soak in the blood. It stands not in a pool, but the earth opens her mouth to receive and to conceal his brother's blood. Sad memorials bespatter the herbage and crimson the soil, but still the dreadful flood is drying up, and the murderer feels a momentary joy. Perhaps Cain went his way dreaming that the terrible matter was all over. He had done the deed, and it could not be undone; he had struck the blow, rid himself of the presence of one who was obnoxious to him; the blood had been swallowed up by the earth, and that was the end to the business which need cause no further thought. There was no machinery in those days of police, and law, and judges, and gallows, and therefore Cain had little or nothing to fear; strong and hale man, with no one to punish him, and nobody to accuse or upbraid him, except his father and his mother, and those, possibly, too bowed with grief and too mindful of their own offense to show much resentment toward their first-born. He may therefore have imagined that the deed was speechless and silent, and that now oblivion would cover his crime, so that he might go his way as though the deed were never done.

It was not so, however, for though that blood was silent in the seared conscience of Cain, it had a voice elsewhere. A mysterious voice went up

beyond the skies; it reached the ear of the Invisible, and moved the heart of Eternal Justice, so that breaking through the veil which conceals the Infinite from man, God revealed Himself and spoke to Cain: "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries unto Me from the ground." Then Cain knew that blood could not be idly spilt, that murder would be avenged, for there was a tongue in every drop of the vital essence which flowed from murdered manhood, which prevailed with God, so that He would interpose and hold a solemn inquest.

Brothers and Sisters, that was a more terrible experiment still which was tried at Calvary, when not the first man was slaughtered but the Son of God Himself; He who was Man but yet was more than man, God manifest in the flesh; it was a dread experiment when having dragged Him before Pilate's judgment seat and falsely condemned Him, having shouted, "Away with Him, away with Him," they actually dared to take the nails and fasten the Son of God to the accursed tree, to lift up His body between earth and Heaven, and there to watch its griefs till they ended in His death, when they pierced His side, and from it flowed blood and water. No doubt Pilate, who had washed his hands in water, thought that no mischief would come of it. The Scribes and Pharisees went their way, and said, "We have silenced the accusing voice. There will no more be heard in our streets of Him who said, 'Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.' We shall no longer be disturbed in our hypocrisy and formality by the Presence of a pure and holy Being, whose simple honesty shall be a stern rebuke to us. We have murdered Him, we have put Him to death without just reason, but that is the end of it. There will be no voice to that blood."

Little did they know that up to Heaven the cry of Jerusalem had already gone, "His blood be on us, and on our children," was registered in the tablets of Justice, and before long Jerusalem became the treasure house of woe and a den of misery, so that the like of her destruction has not been, neither ever shall be, upon the face of the earth. Far more delightful is the fact that another and more melodious cry went up to Heaven from the Cross of Calvary. "Father, forgive them," resounded from the wounds of Immanuel. The blood of Abel was not voiceless, and the blood of Jesus was not dumb; it cried so as to be heard amid the thrones of Heaven, and blessed be God, it spoke *for* us and not against us; it spoke not worse things, as it might well have done, but better things than that of Abel. It did not demand fiercer vengeance than that which fell upon Cain, it did not ask that we might be driven vagabonds and fugitives upon the face of the earth, and to be at last banished from God into Hell forever, but it cried, "Father, forgive them," and it prevailed, and the curse was taken away, and a blessing came to the sons of men.

This morning we propose to keep our discourse to the subject of the voice of the blood of Abel and the voice of the blood of Jesus, as standing in comparison the one with the other. They both spoke. That is evident. Abel being dead yet speaks, said the Apostle, and we know to our abiding comfort that the blood of Jesus pleads before the Eternal Throne. All

blood has a voice, for God is jealous of its preservation, the blood of excellent and just men has a more heavenly speech still, but the voice of the blood of Jesus far surpasses all, and among ten thousand voices it bears the palm.

I. In the first place, JESUS' BLOOD SPEAKS BETTER THINGS IN GENERAL.

What did the blood of Abel say? Was it not the blood of *testimony?* When Abel fell to the ground beneath his brother's club, he bore witness to spiritual religion. Cain was the lover of a merely outward worship in which faith had no place. He loved a worship of show and pomp, he garnished the altar with fruits and decked it with flowers; his was a religion of taste and elegance, a religion of his own devising; but it was devoid of a humble, believing, spiritual reference to the promised Deliverer. Abel stood there the professor of an ungarnished religion of faith in the promised Sacrifice. On the altar was a lamb, bleeding from its death wound, and laid in order for burning; a ghastly spectacle not to be delighted in by taste, a thing from which the lovers of the beautiful would turn away. Abel had chosen such an offering because God had chosen it, and because it was the fit means for leading his faith to its true Object, the Lord Jesus Christ. He saw by faith in the bleeding lamb the memorial of the Lord's great Propitiation for sin, which could not be seen in Cain's offering of the fruits of the earth, however tasteful that offering might be. Abel stands forth before us as the first in a cloud of witnesses, bearing brave testimony, and prepared to seal it with their lives. He died a martyr for the truth, the grandly God-like truth that God accepts men according to their faith. All honor to the martyr's blood which speaks so effectually for the precious Truth of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ, being also a Testifier and Witness for the faith of God, spoke better things than Abel, because He had more to speak, and spoke from more intimate acquaintance with God. He was a fuller Witness of Divine Truth than Abel could be, for He brought life and immortality to light, and told His people clearly of the Father.

Our Lord Jesus Christ had been in the bosom of the Father, and knew the Divine Secret; this Secret He revealed to the sons of men in His ministry, and then He sealed it by His blood. It is not to be forgotten that though the death of Christ was in chief an Atonement for sin, yet it was also a testimony to the Truth of God, for He is said to be a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people, and as a dying, bleeding Martyr, it will be clear to you that this blood testifies to fuller, brighter, and more glorious Truth than did the blood of Abel.

Moreover, the blood of Abel spoke good things in that it was the *proof of faithfulness.* This dear servant of the Great Master was faithful under his brother's opposition; yes, faithful unto death. It could not be said of him as the Apostle said of certain others, "You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." He resisted sin even unto blood; he was faithful in all his house as a servant; he turned not from his integrity, and counted not his life dear unto him. His blood as it fell to the ground

spoke this good thing—it said, "Great God, Abel is faithful to You." But the blood of Jesus Christ testifies to yet greater faithfulness still, for it was the sequel of a spotlessly perfect Life, which no act of sin had ever defiled; whereas Abel's death furnished, it is true, a life of faith, but not a life of perfection. The faithfulness of Jesus was complete from the day of His birth to the hour of His death; and inasmuch as He needed not otherwise to die, His voluntary yielding up of life was all the more an act of obedience, and the better proof of His fidelity to His trust.

Moreover, we must never forget that all that Abel's blood could say as it fell to the ground was but *the shadow* of that more glorious substance to which Jesus' death assures us. Jesus did not typify Atonement, but offered it; He was not the representative of sacrifice; He was the Great Sacrifice itself, and inasmuch as the substance must ever excel the shadow, the blood of Jesus Christ speaks better things than that of Abel.

It is well to add that our Lord's Person was infinitely more worthy and glorious than that of Abel, and consequently His death must yield to us a more golden-mouthed discourse than the death of a mere man like Abel. He who dies at the hand of Cain is but one of our race, testifying to truth and righteousness, testifying by faith to a Sacrifice to come; but He who died at the hand of Herod and of Pilate was Divine, and came upon no common errand, with no ordinary message to deliver. When the glorious Son of God bowed His head and gave up the ghost, the Voice that arose from His blood must necessarily have been louder, sweeter, more full, and more God-like than the voice of the martyred Abel's gore. We understand then, before coming to details, that on general principles we may be pretty clear that the blood of Jesus would speak better things than that of Abel.

II. Now we will enter the very heart of our text, while we remember that THE BLOOD OF JESUS SPEAKS BETTER THINGS TO GOD than the blood of Abel did. The blood of Abel cried in the ears of the Lord, for thus He said to Cain, "The voice of your brother's blood cries unto *Me* from the ground." That cry did not go round to seek a mediator, but went directly to the Judgment Seat of God, and laid an accusation against the murderer. Now what did Abel's blood say to God? Standing by the spot where Abel fell, and marking the ground all crimson with clotted gore, what would the blood seem to you to say? What would be your own reflection? What would you conceive that the blood said to God? It said just this, "O God, one of Your own creatures, the product of Your matchless skill, has been dashed in pieces, and barbarously destroyed. A living, sensitive body formed by art and skill, such as only You could show, has been wantonly broken. The potter will not bear, that the vessel which has been fashioned upon the wheel with much cost and labor should be wantonly broken, but here is a body far more costly, far more wonderful than anything which human art could create, and this has been destroyed. Great God, the Creator of all things, will You look on this with patience, will You bear to see the work of Your own hands most cruelly destroyed?" Was there not much in this cry? Then that blood

would plead still further, "O God, Your creature has been destroyed without cause. No just reason of provocation has been given, no offense has been committed which could deserve so terrible a stroke; but one of Your feeble creatures who has a claim upon Your kind protection has been wantonly and needlessly slain—his blood appeals to You! Judge of all the earth, will You let the weak be trod down by the strong, and will You allow the innocent to be struck by the fierce hand of the wicked?"

You see the cry gathers force. At first it is, "O God, Your creature has been destroyed." Next it is, "O God, Your subject has been maltreated by one of his fellow subjects, by one who has become Your enemy—will You not interfere?" Yet the blood of Abel said more than this; it said, "O God, the blood shed here was shed for You." It seemed to say, "If it were not for love of You this blood had not been shed! If these drops had not been consecrated by devotion, if this blood had not flowed in the veins of a man who loved God with all his heart it had not been poured out upon the ground. O God," cries every drop, "I fell upon the ground for You—will You endure this? Shall a creature that You have made yield up its life with pain and anguish for You, and will You be like a cold, motionless, unmoved, immovable statue, and look on without emotion? Will You not bestir Yourself, O God? Shall blood be shed on Your behalf, shed unjustly too, the blood of Your own loving, righteous creature, and will You not interfere?" What force there is in such a voice! Yet the blood added to this, "O God, I have been shed in defiance of You," for the stroke which came from Cain's hand was not aimed merely at Abel, it was in spirit aimed at God, for if Cain could have done the same to God as he did to his brother Abel, he doubtless would have done it. He was of that Wicked One, and therefore slew his brother, and the wickedness which was in him was *Deicidal;* he would have slain God Himself if it had been in his power, and so the blood cried, "O God, here is the gauntlet of defiance thrown down to You. Cain defies You. He has struck the first blow at You, he has struck down the vanguard of the army of Your Elect. Will You look on quietly? Will You take no vengeance? Will You have no regard? Shall there be silence in Heaven when there are groans and cries on earth? Shall Heaven's heart be cold when the heart of the enemy is hot with rage and fierce with rebellion? O God, will You not interpose?"

Surely this is a Heaven-piercing cry, but this is not all. The blood of the proto-martyr added to all this such an appeal as the following—"O God, this is the first of human blood that has been murderously shed, and shed by an unnatural brother's hand. Will You pass this by? Then how can You be Just? Did not this blood challenge the very existence of Justice in God? O God, if You do not punish this first barbarous man-slayer, who kills his brother, than all down the ages men will riot in blood and wanton in murder, and they will say, 'How does God know? He who sits in the heavens regards not, He will not so much as speak!'" It were as though God should issue a license for man to shed each other's blood, and give permission for red-handed murder to lord it over the whole Creation, if the first murder should pass unnoticed by the great

Judge of All. Do you hear, my Brothers and Sisters, what a cry the blood of Abel must have had, and with what power it arose to Heaven? But we are not left to conjecture as to the power of that cry, for we are told that God heard, and when He heard it *He* came to reckoning with Cain, and He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries to Me from the ground." Then came the withering sentence of it. The ground which had drank in the blood became accursed to Cain, so that dig it as he might it would not yield him a bounteous harvest, plow it as he would, with all his skill and craft, it never would yield its strength to him. The original curse of the thorn and the thistle, which had fallen upon it when Adam survived, was now doubled to Cain, so that he reaped but handfuls and gathered scanty sheaves. This would be a constant bitter mingled with his daily bread, while over and above that he received unto his heart a curse which made him the slave of his own dreads. He served Fear and Trembling as his gods, and went about the earth with darkness within him and darkness round about him, never more rejoicing, but wearing the mark of reprobation fixed upon his brow. He life was doubtless Hell upon earth, and at last he was driven forever from the Presence of the Most High God. Blood has a voice in it, and when it is heard against a man it brings upon him a curse untold.

Well now, Brothers and Sisters, it is a very sweet task to ask you to turn your minds away from the blood of Abel to the blood of Jesus. I feel persuaded that you did just now recognize the voice of Abel's blood, and I want your minds to hear with equal distinctness the Voice of Jesus Christ's blood, for there are the same reasons for its loudness, but they are all far more emphatic. Can you stand at Calvary and view the flowing of the Savior's blood from hands, and feet, and side? What are your own reflections as to what that blood says to God? Think, now, at the foot of the Cross. That blood cries with a loud voice to God, and what does it say? Does it not say this? "O God, this time it is not merely a creature which bleeds, but though the body that hangs upon the Cross is the Creature of Your Holy Spirit, it is Your own Son who now pours out His soul unto death. O God, it is Your Only-Begotten One, dear to You, essentially One with You, One in whom You are well-pleased, whose obedience is perfect, whose Love to You has been unwavering—it is He who dies! O God, will You despise the cries and the tears, the groans, the moans, the blood of Your own Son? Most tender Father, in whose bosom Jesus lay from the foundations of the earth, *He* dies, and will You not regard *Him?* Shall His blood fall to the ground in vain?"

Then, moreover, the Voice would plead, "It is not only Your Son, but Your perfectly innocent Son, in whom was no necessity for dying, because He had no original sin which would have brought corruption on Him, who had moreover no actual sin, who throughout life had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. O God, it is Your Only-Begotten, who, without a fault, is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and stands like a sheep before her shearers. Can You see it, God of All, can You see the infinitely Holy and Just Son of Your heart led here to die—can You see it,

and not feel the force of the blood as it cries to You?" Was there not added to this fact that our Lord died to vindicate the honor of His Father? "For You, O God, for You He dies! He who hangs on Calvary hangs there in deference to Your own Decree, in fulfillment of Your own Purpose, in vindication of the honor of Your Law, that You may Yourself be glorified, that Your Justice may have full scope, and Your Mercy may have illimitable sway. O God, the Sufferer, pale in death, whose wounds are torn open with the cruel nails, and whose soul is racked with pain unutterable, dies for You. If there had been no God He need not die. If there were no Law to vindicate, no Truth to defend, no Honor, and Majesty, and Justice to which to pay homage, it need not that He died. If You were content to stain Your Honor or to restrain Your Mercy, there were no need that He should give Himself. But it is for You, for You with each pang, for You with each groan, for You each drop of blood, and will You not be moved by it all?"

Brothers and Sisters, is there not power in this Voice? Yet over and above this the blood must have pleaded thus with God—"O God, the blood which is now being shed, thus honorable and glorious in itself, is being poured out with a motive which is Divinely Gracious. He who dies on this Cross dies for His enemy, groans for those who make Him groan, suffers for those who thrust the dart into His soul, and then mock at the agony which they themselves have caused. O God, it is a chain for God in Heaven which binds the victim to the horns of the altar, a chain of everlasting Love, of illimitable Goodness." Now, dear Friends, you and I could not see a man suffer out of pure benevolence without being moved by his sufferings, and shall God be unmoved? The perfectly Holy and Gracious God—shall He be indifferent where you and I are stirred to deep emotion? The sight of blood makes some of us shudder; the sight of blood shed from an innocent person—shed by the hand of violence—would make our very souls chill within us, but the thought of that blood being shed with a motive so amazing, because of a disinterested affection towards undeserving criminals—this would move us indeed; and do you dream that it did not move the heart of God?

Blessed be His name, we are not left to conjecture here; it so moved our heavenly Father that to this day God has come to man, and speaking to us through that blood He has said, "What have you done? Whatever you have done, however black and filthy your sin may have been, the voice of My Son's blood cries unto Me from the ground, and now from this day forth I have taken off the curse from the earth for His sake, neither will I curse it any more. You shall be blessed in your basket and in your store, in your going out and in your coming in. I have forgiven you your iniquities; I have set a mark upon you and no man shall hurt you, neither shall Justice smite you, for in the Person of My dear Son I have received and accepted you, guilty as you are. Go your way, and live happily and peaceably, for I have taken away your iniquities and cast your sins behind My back, and the day has come in that if your sins are searched for, they shall not be found, yes, if they are sought out they

shall not be found, says the Lord, for I have pardoned them whom I have reserved." Abel's blood had mighty prevalence to curse, but Jesus' blood has prevalence to bless the sons of men.

I want you to dwell a little on this thought to digest it. I wish I had the power to send it home; only the Holy Spirit, however, can do that. I want, however, just to dwell on it, that you may get into the soul of it. Observe that the blood of Abel spoke to God long before Cain spoke. Cain was deaf to the voice of his brother's blood, but God heard it. Sinner, long before you hear the blood of Jesus, God hears it, and spares your guilty soul. Long before that blood comes into your soul to melt you to repentance, it pleads for you with God. It was not the voice of Cain that brought down vengeance, but the voice of Abel's blood; and it is not the cry of the sinner seeking mercy that is the cause of mercy, it is the cry of that Blood of Jesus. I know you will tell me you cannot pray; oh what a mercy it is that the Blood can, and when you cannot plead so as to prevail, the Blood pleads. If you are to win mercy from God and get forgiveness, it will not be by the efficacy of your prayers and tears, but through the efficacy of that Blood of God's dear Son. Cain did not ask for vengeance, but it came unsought through the blood. And you, though you feel as if you hardly dare look for mercy, yet shall find it if you can trust the Blood of Jesus which speaks for you. The Blood does not need your voice to increase its power with God—He will hear your voice—but it is because He hears the Blood of Jesus first of all. It is a mercy for us that the blood of Jesus Christ speaks for the guilty, even as the blood of Abel spoke against the guilty. Jesus' blood pleads not for the innocent, if such there are, they need no plea from an Atoning Sacrifice. Jesus pleads for the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell among them—for you who have broken His Laws, and despised His Love, and fought against His Power—the blood of Jesus pleads for such as you, for He came into the world to save sinners. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The precious Book speaks constantly. Did you notice that word in the text? "That *speaks*." Not, "that did speak," but, "that speaks." The Blood of Jesus pleaded for the thief upon the cross, but it—

"Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more."

Brothers and Sisters, when prevailing sin oppresses the conscience, it is a thousand mercies to know that we have even now a prevailing Savior. Years ago some of us came to Christ and we found pardon; but our faith occasionally faints, and our doubts grow strong. Come, let us go afresh to the Fountain, let us look anew to the Cross, for the Blood still speaks. Still in effect our Lord Jesus bleeds today as much as He did 1800 years ago, for the Blood is just as certain in its power with God at the present moment as when the thief said, "Lord, remember me." Let us think of this and rejoice in it. My Soul, when you cannot plead with God, when you dare not, when your tongue is silent, and despair gags your mouth,

even then Jesus pleads. Now lay hold upon the Intercessor; come and cast yourself upon Him; rest wholly in Him, He must prevail though you cannot, he must succeed though you have no power whatever. Come then, and link yourself with the Infallible prevalent plea of the precious Blood, and it is all well with you, all safe with you, and safe forever. God grant us Grace to do this, each one of us, and His be the praise!

III. Furthermore, JESUS' BLOOD SPEAKS BETTER THINGS TO US IN OUR OWN HEARTS than did the blood of Abel.

I suppose most of you read the account written by the newspaper correspondents who have passed over the battlefields of Königgratz or Sadowa. How it sickens one to read of ditches filled with blood, and of the smell from putrid corpses being so intolerable that travelers had to leave the battlefield in haste. I would not like to be Bismarck, nor the Crown Prince of Prussia, nor the King, nor anyone who had a hand in a war so unjustifiable. I suppose that wholesale assassins grow used to such things; I suppose that they can read of thousands mangled by shot and shell without emotion, and even see the heaps of corpses without a shudder, but I am certain of this, that it would drive me mad. Ah, to have the blood of one person knowingly laid at my door would be enough to dash all comfort from my life; But to have the blood of tens of thousands poured out to gratify my ambition, I think that must make Reason reel at once. It must be an absence of conscience which makes Reason to keep her throne when men have been wading through their fellows' blood for mere purposes of selfish gain. Seeing that there had been no wars in Cain's day, and that the human heart had not been brutalized as it now is, so as to speak of war as we now do in such gentle terms, surely if he had had any conscience at all, it must have been a horrible thought to him that he had killed his brother. "I have killed a man, I have shed his blood." Surely it made him start in his sleep. How could he be quiet upon his lonely couch? That red-handed man! Guilt, a grim chamberlain, with fingers bloody red would surely draw the curtains of his bed. Would not the spectacle all come up before his mind? The talk in the field, the sudden impulse, the blow, the blood, the look of his victim as he cried for pity as one cruel stroke succeeded another; and then the sight of the ghastly body and the streaming blood, and the crimson marks on the earth. Oh, it must have been a recollection clinging like a viper around the murderer wherever he might be! He might well build a city, as we are told he did, in order to quench these fiery remembrances.

Then would the thought come upon him, "You slew him though he was your brother." "Am I my brother's keeper?" he said, but men can talk sometimes more braggingly than their heart talks in secret. The horror of brother-killing must have haunted Cain—"I slew my brother, I, the first that was born of woman slew the second-born." And then it would be suggested, "And why did I slay him? What evil had he done me? What if he did offer a different sacrifice from mine, and what if God did accept *him* and not me, yet what hurt had he done me?" The innocence of his victim, if Cain had any conscience, must have increased his uneasiness,

for he would remember how inoffensively he had kept those sheep of his, and had been like one among them, so lamb-like, that shepherd-man himself, a true sheep of God's pasture. "Yet," Cain would say, "I slew him because I hated God, the God before whose bar I am soon to stand, the God who set this mark on me." Can you picture the man who had thus to be daily schooled and upbraided by his brother's blood? It needs a poet's mind to teach him. Think how you would feel if you had killed your own brother, how the guilt would hang over you like a black cloud, and drop horror into your very soul.

Now, Beloved, there is more than equal force in the cry of the Blood of Jesus, only it acts differently, and it speaks better things. Let it be remembered, however, that it speaks those better things with the same force. Comforts arise from the blood of Jesus as powerful as the horrors which arose from the blood of Abel. When the sinner looks to Jesus slain, he may well say, "If I did not know that all this blood was shed for me as well as by me, my fears would multiply a thousand fold; but when I think that that precious blood is blood shed instead of mine, that it is blood which God planned and ordained should be shed for me from before the foundation of the world, when I think that that is the blood of God's own dear Son, whom He has struck instead of striking me, making Him bear the whole of His Wrath that I might not bear it, O my God, what comforts come streaming from this blessed Fountain!" Just in proportion as thought of murder would make Cain wretched, in the same proportion ought faith to make you happy as you think upon Jesus Christ slain; for the blood of Christ, as I said at the beginning of the sermon, cannot have a less powerful Voice. It must have a more powerful Voice than that of Abel, and it cries, therefore, more powerfully for you than the blood of Abel cried against his brother Cain. Oh, then, my clamoring sins, I can hear you, but I am not afraid of you, for the Blood of Jesus speaks louder than you all! Oh, then, Conscience, I can hear your accusation, but I am not alarmed, for my Savior died. I come before God with perfect confidence, because I am sprinkled with the blood of my Substitute.

If the horror of Cain with an awakened conscience might be unendurable, so the peace which comes to me through the precious Blood of Jesus is indescribable and unutterable, a peace like a river, a righteousness like the waves of the sea. Sweet peace have all they who hear the Blood speaking in their souls, telling them that sin is forgiven, that God is reconciled, that we are accepted in the Beloved, and that now we are preserved in Christ Jesus, and shall never perish, neither shall any pluck us out of His hand. I trust you know, I know many of you do, the sweet power of this peace-speaking Blood. Such innocent blood, ordained on purpose to give peace, is precious beyond all price. O my Soul, never look for peace elsewhere, and never be afraid of finding peace here. If today, O Christian, you have lost your confidence, if today you are conscious of having been false to your Lord, and of having done despite to His Spirit, if today you feel ashamed of the very name of a Christian because you have dishonored it, if today despair is ready to

strangle your hope, and you are tempted to give it all up, yet come now, even now, to this precious Blood of Jesus Christ. Do not think that my Savior can save merely the little sinners; He is a great Savior—mighty to save. I know your sins speak very loudly—ah, well they may; I hope you will hear their voices and hate them in the future—but they cannot speak so loudly as the Blood of Jesus does. It says, "Father, Father, shall I die in vain? Father, I paid My blood for sinners, shall not sinners be saved? I was struck for the guilty, shall the guilty be struck, too?"

The blood says, "O God, I have vindicated Your Law, what more do You demand? I have honored Your Justice, why should You cast the sinner into Hell? O Divine Benignity, can You take two exactions for one offense, and punish those for whom Jesus suffered? O Justice! Will you here avenge? O Mercy! When the way is cleared, will you not run to guilty sinners? O Love Divine, when the pathway is opened for You, will You not show Yourself to the rebellious and the vile?" The Blood shall not plead in vain! Sinners shall be saved, and you and I, I hope, among them to the praise and glory of His Grace.

IV. Two or three words to close with. JESUS' BLOOD, EVEN IN MY TEXT, SPEAKS BETTER THINGS THAN THAT OF ABEL.

It speaks the same things but in a better sense. Did you notice the first text? God said unto Cain, "What have you done?" Now that is what Christ's blood says to you: "What have you done?" My dear Hearer, do you not know that your sins slew the Savior? If we have been playing with sin, and fancied it to be a very little thing, a trifle to play with and laugh at, let us correct the mistake! Our Savior hangs on the Cross, and was nailed there by those sins of ours; shall we think little of them? Looking from the Cross, Jesus says to us, "What have you done?" O my Hearer, what have you done? You have slain your Best Friend and ruined yourself! Let me come home personally to everyone. Make an inventory now of your sins. Go over the black list from your childhood till now. What have you done? Ah Lord, done enough to make me weep forever if it were not that You have wept for me. Drops of grief can never repay the debt which is due to Your Blood. Alas, I have done evil, Lord, but You have done good to me. "What have you done? What have you done?" was a dreadful accusation to Cain, it might have gone through him like a dart; but to you and to me it is the soft enquiring voice of a Father's Love bringing us to repentance. May it bring us now!

What I want mainly to indicate is this. If you notice in the second text, this blood is called *"the blood of sprinkling."* Whether Abel's blood sprinkled Cain or not I cannot say, but if it did it must have added to his horror to have had the blood actually upon him. But this adds to the joy in our case, for the Blood of Jesus is of little value to us until it is sprinkled upon us. Faith dips the hyssop in the Atoning Blood and sprinkles it upon the soul, and the soul is clean. The application of the Blood of Jesus is the true ground of joy, and the sure source of Christian comfort. The application of the blood of Abel must have been horror, but the application of the Blood of Jesus is the root and ground of all delight.

There is another matter in the text with which I conclude. The Apostle says, "We have *come* to the blood of sprinkling." He mentions that among other things to which we have *come*. Now, from the blood of Abel every reasonable man would flee. He who has murdered his fellow desires to put a wide distance between himself and the accusing corpse. But we come to the Blood of Jesus. It is a topic in which we delight as our contemplations bring us nearer and nearer to it. I ask you, dear Christian Friends, to come nearer to it this morning than you have ever been. Think over the great Truth of Substitution. Portray to yourselves the sufferings of the Savior. Dwell in His sight, sit at the foot of Calvary, abide in the presence of His Cross, and never turn away from that great spectacle of mercy and of misery. *Come* to it; be not afraid! Ho, Sinners, who have never trusted Jesus, look here and live! May you come to Him now!—

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away,
Like doves to Jesus' wounds."

No, do not run away from the wounds which you have made, but find shelter in them! Don't forget the sufferings of Christ, but rest in them! Your only hope lies in trusting in Jesus, resting wholly upon Him. Think much of the griefs of your Lord! And if I might suggest to some of you who will not be going out this afternoon, perhaps if you could spend an hour or two between services in considering the sufferings of the Savior, those considerations might be the means of bringing faith to you. Faith comes by hearing, but it is a thoughtful hearing; and hearing comes by the Word of God, but the Word must be thought over. Open the Word, read the story of the Cross. Ask the Master to bless it to you, and who knows but through the Divine Spirit some of you may yet hear the Voice of that Blood which speaks better things than that of Abel! The Lord bless every one of you for His name's sake. Amen.

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KICKING AGAINST THE PRICKS
NO. 709

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 9, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"It is hard for you to kick against the pricks."
Acts 9:5.

THIS expression is highly characteristic of the Savior from *its figurative form.* While He was on earth, He spoke to the people in parables; and speaking out of Heaven, in this instance, He still adopts the parabolic style, as He did in Patmos, when He revealed Himself to John as walking among the golden candlesticks. Here is a parable wrapped up in a few words—the parable of the ox that was willful, and being stricken with the ox-goad kicked against it, and drove the ox-goad still deeper into its flesh—a very instructive simile, very natural and unstrained like the rest of the Savior's parables, and very full of meaning. It is plain, direct, appropriate, simple, and self-explaining, like the other parables of our Lord. I recognize in the Speaker, who addressed Saul of Tarsus, the Man to whom the common people listened gladly, because of the interesting manner in which He delivered His teachings. The great Master of simple metaphor, who here addresses the rebellious Saul, clings to His chosen style, and continues to clothe truth in allegory. He does not say to Saul, "It is injurious to you to resist My appeals," that would be mere abstract fact, but He puts it more pictorially, "It is hard for you to kick against the pricks."

Another feature of our Lord's Character is very manifest in this sentence. Observe *the tenderness of the rebuke.* It is not, "Oh, Saul, it is wicked, ungenerous, and mischievous of you to resist Me." There is no rebuke of that kind; unless it may be implied in the expression, "Why do you persecute Me?" But the Savior leaves Saul's conscience to say that, and does not utter it Himself. Nor did Jesus say, "Saul, Saul, it is very hard for My people to bear your cruelties," nor does He add, "It is very provoking to Me, and I shall before long strike you in My Wrath." No, it is not, "It is hard for *Me*," but "It is hard for *you,*" as if the thoughts of the Savior were so set upon His poor, erring, but ignorant child that He felt, "As to what you do to My cause, I will say nothing; but look what you are doing to yourself; you are losing joy and comfort; you are injuring your own soul; you are sowing for yourself the seeds of future sorrow. It is hard for *you."* Who but the Savior could have spoken after this fashion? I do not believe that the most tender-hearted of the Savior's ministers have been accustomed to look upon persecutors in that light. If we hear of tyrants breathing out threats and slaughter against God's people, we very readily say, "What a wicked thing! What a cruel and unrighteous thing!" But how seldom do we exclaim, "What a sad thing it is for the persecutor!" We add, perhaps, with a little sober vindictiveness, "What a terrible fate will be that man's!" But we feel but little deep pity for one

whose terrible case it is to be an enemy to the sinner's Friend. Alas, what a bitter portion the poor, ignorant, offending persecutor has chosen; may we be Christ-like enough to have pity upon him! The Savior looks at sin through the glass of compassion; we often look upon it through the lens of Pharisaic pride. Jesus, in the words before us, shines forth as the very same Savior who said to the woman taken in adultery, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more!" It was a gentle voice which said, "It is hard for you to kick against the pricks."

We shall ask you to commence this discourse by praying that He who said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" may be pleased to speak to some in this great assembly; and may He who turned the enemy into a friend do the same wonder with some men and women here! People of God, breathe that prayer! There is no need for you to speak it; the Searcher of all hearts knows your desire. Why should not gracious wonders be worked while we have such a God to deal with? There are many reasons why it should be our desire and our prayer. The more grievous the offender may have been the greater will be the triumph of Divine Grace in his conversion, and the richer the consolation that shall come to the Church, as it will be to us a greater proof of the power of the Grace of God in these latter days. Pray, then, that the proud sinner may be brought upon his knees today.

We have in the text five things—*an ox, an ox-goad, kicks against it, painful results, and a wise counsel.*

I. We have in the parable of the text AN OX. That ox is here employed as the picture of persecuting Saul and of all who are like he. No other beast besides the ox is driven by an ox-goad, and therefore it must be the ox which is here meant as kicking against the pricks or goads when he is urged onward by the driver. Alas, how low is man fallen that he can fitly be *compared to a brute beast!* "Oh," said the proud heart, "does God compare me to a beast?" Ah, my Friend, and it is the beast which has cause to complain rather than you; for what beast is that which has rebelled against God? I never heard of such. The beast acknowledges God and bows its neck to man, whom God appoints to be its ruler; the beast fulfils its Maker's purpose; it lives and it dies, and both in life and death it answers the end for which God sent it into the world; but as for you, you wantonly to run against God, and when you know His will you do the contrary; and though He has addressed you with words of love and tenderness as He does some of you every Sunday, yet you will not hear, but reject what He says, and go on in your rebellious ways. Do not be angry if God should compare you to a beast, for if you knew yourself you would compare yourself to one too, for even holy David once said, "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before You." Penitent sinners have frequently wished that they had been beasts rather than men, for they have felt as if sin had degraded their nature below the degradation of the meanest reptile that creeps upon its belly. Oh, Soul, if you know yourself you will not be angry for being thus compared, but smiting upon your breast like the publican, you will confess yourself unworthy to lift so much as your eyes to Heaven.

But courage! Though God compares the unregenerate and rebellious sinner to a beast, yet it is to *a valuable animal;* it is to a creature which is an object of property and possesses value. The text does not liken a man to a wild beast without an owner, but to an ox for which its master cares, and for which he has paid a price. The ox is bought with money; it is often dearly purchased. When God compared Saul to an ox, He did as good as say to him, "You are acting like a wild bull, running against Me and goring My people; but still you are precious in My sight, and are purchased with a price." "I," says Jesus, "I whom you persecute, I redeemed you, not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with My own precious blood; you are Mine, and I will not let you go; you are Mine, and I will break you in—I will curb that stubborn will of yours. Why do you kick against Me, for I mean to subdue you to do My work. It is vain for you to strive and struggle, for I have bought you and I will have you. I have paid for you too dearly to let you be lost. I have looked upon you as Mine too long to let you go astray from Me any more. I will have you, and therefore bow at once, for your will shall not long stand out against Mine." There are some in this house whose conduct might make them comparable to beasts, but I hope they are the objects of God's Eternal Love and of the purchase of the Savior's Atonement, and they are therefore not likened to the wild beasts of the forest that go to their dens uncared for, but to an ox which is written down among the wealth of its possessor.

Our Lord Jesus also compared Saul here to the ox, because *the ox is an animal that is dependent upon its master for the supply of its needs.* Here you will remember the Prophet Isaiah said, "The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib." The ox receives its fodder from its master's hand, and knows the hand that feeds it. You who are an enemy to God this morning, do you not know that you are His creature, and that you are the object of His daily Providence? The breath which is in your nostrils and in mine comes from the Most High. He formed us of clay, and His Omnipotence keeps together the particles of dust that make our frame; but for His preservation we should at once go back to Mother Earth, and the place that knows us would know us no more forever. Dear Hearer, have we not been worse than oxen? We have not known the hand that feeds us. Have we not kicked against the God from whom all our mercies have been flowing? Oh, then, we must be worse than beasts if we do not feel a pang of conscience at the thought of God's Kindness and our ingratitude. To be indebted to God for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, 70 years of Mercy, and yet never to be grateful to Him! To have received life, breath, and strength from Him, and today to receive the Gospel from His hands and yet to go our way indifferent and careless! This is a crime to be detested and abominated.

An ox is *a creature of which service is rightly demanded.* As every man who keeps an ox expects it to serve him, so also does God expect of those creatures whose needs He supplies that they should do His bidding. Why should God keep them, and they do Him no service? Would you yourself fodder an ox that would not plow if you use it for such work? Or would you feed a horse that would never be a beast of draft to you? Would you

keep even a dog if it did not follow at your heels and flatter you? If the cur snapped at you and howled at you as you do, O Sinner, against your Maker, you would soon have done with feeding him. Take heed lest God have done with feeding you, for if He gets no service out of you He will not forever spare you. We are like the ox; we must either serve or die; we must either plow or bleed; the bullock which is not good for its master in the furrows shall soon be good for the butcher in the shop; and the man who will not serve God in life shall before long have to acknowledge His Justice in the pangs of death, and to show to wondering worlds what the Judgments of God are in the terrors of Eternity.

The ox was also selected as a picture of Saul because of its *perverseness*. The bullock is not easily made accustomed to the yoke. It is not easy to train an ox to do one's bidding. Therefore a very rough and cruel instrument was used by the Eastern farmer—a long stick with a sharp prong at the end which he drove into the stubborn ox to compel it to move. The ox was sometimes very perverse, and when it set its neck to go its own way it was not easy for the farmer to make it move in another, and therefore the strokes of the ox-goad were sharp and many. Ah, how perverse are our wills! They are more stubborn, surely, than the ox. We will not go in the right way; we choose the wrong naturally. We go to the fire of sin and we put our finger in it, and we burn it; but we do not learn better; we then thrust our hands into it, and though we suffer for it, we return and plunge our arm into the flame. There are some who are suffering at this very day for their sins. The sins of their youth are in their bones, and yet they stagger to their lusts again; and like the moth that flies to the candle and having singed its wings drops down in pain and agony, and only gets strength enough to fly up to the candle again, so do some men with their sins. But while we are swift to sin, how slow we are to righteousness! Parents sometimes complain that they cannot teach their children, they are so willful. Ah, if they were as willful as we are towards God, we would have cause enough to complain. The teacher says, "I have taught this child 19 times, and he will not learn," but God has taught 19,000 times—"Line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," every day has had its word and every night its sentence; and yet we are like the deaf adder which will not hear the voice of the charmer, though he charms ever so wisely. This is humbling, but it is true. God makes us feel it to be true, and puts us in a proper frame of mind on account of it.

Yet remember there is this thing about the ox—though thus a perverse animal, it is *a creature which can be of great service to its master.* When the ox becomes docile, and puts its neck to the yoke, and plows in patient earnestness, it is one of the most valuable possessions of the Oriental farmer. What would he do without it? The patient ox in the East is very largely used in draft as well as in tillage; and it is one of the most precious things that a poor man has in the East, to possess that admirably laborious and patient animal. When man once gives his heart to his Master—when once this brutish heart is conquered by Divine Grace, and becomes a servant of God, of what use he is! Do you see the labor and zeal of Paul? Why, he never grew weary. He was an ox that

never fretted under the yoke. He went to the end of many a long furrow and back again, and to the end again. No stripes hindered him; no prisons stopped him. He was not afraid of Death itself. He crossed the boisterous sea—no mean feat in those days of unskilled navigation; he traversed the equally dangerous land, suffering perils from robbers, from rivers, from wild beasts, and from false brethren. Like a strong ox he plowed a heavy soil from morning to evening without complaint. He left no work undone, but he could say at the close of his career, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith!" Oh, what a vast amount of good might be done by some of those who are now doing so much mischief! When a sinner is really convicted of sin he cannot think that God Himself can ever make anything of him—but you do not know. Look at that swearing fellow on Elstow Green—the gypsy tinker—who would think that his mischievous hand would ever write of the Celestial City, of the land Beulah, and of the blessed progress of the Pilgrim?

Just look at that poor fellow sold as a slave, a prey to everything that is evil; it is John Newton—who would expect to hear him in the pulpit of St. Mary Woolnoth, telling of the mighty Grace of God? Ah, but the Lord can thus get a double victory over Satan, not merely by capturing Satan's best men, but by transforming them into captains in the Army of the Cross. May God grant that some here, who have been like the ox for perverseness and stubbornness, and whose final doom would be to be felled by the pole-axe of death, may be subdued by the great Lion Tamer, who can surely tame the ox. May Jesus come and put His yoke upon your necks, for "His yoke is easy and His burden is light." And from this day forth may you serve in the Kingdom of King Jesus, to the praise of the glory of His Divine Grace.

II. In the second place, in this little parable, which is so full of teaching, we have THE OX-GOAD. No doubt it is a cruel instrument, but it is one which was thought by the Oriental farmer to be necessary for the stubborn nature of the ox. When he needed to make his ox go he just drove the goad into it from behind; not walking by the side of it, as we would probably do here, but keeping to the handle of the plow, and then pricking the ox from behind. Our God has many ways of goading us, but He does not use the goad with us where gentler means will avail. I should think that a kind farmer would speak to his ox, and might get it into such a condition that it would know what it was to do and be obedient to his word. Now God brings His people into such a state as that. He says, "I will guide you with My eyes." And He says, "Be not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding—whose mouth must be held with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you." He might also have said, "Be you not as the ox, which has need to feel the ox-goad or else it will not stir." God does not come to blows with men till He has first tried words with them. It is a word and a blow with man; but there is often a long space between the word and the blow with God. It is, "Turn! Turn! Why will you die?" before He comes with the executioner's axe. Before the tree is cut down there is a time of sparing, in which it is dug about, in hopes it may bring forth fruit. But when words are of no avail, then the

Lord, in tender Mercy, if He means to save the soul, adopts sharper means, and comes from words to blows and then wounds. Some of you know how God will wound us when He means to save us. The Psalmist describes it as being broken in pieces. He groans over "the bones which You have broken," for God does give such cuffs by the hand of Providence, and such blows by the law upon the conscience, that He appears as if He were cruel and would utterly slay us; and, indeed, He will kill us in order that He may save us; He will break us in pieces that He may bind us up; and He will wound us that He may come, in all His Power, to heal.

Let us for a minute or two think about this ox-goad, and how you and I have felt it, and how some are feeling it today and yet kicking against it. Some of us felt the ox-goad when we were children. Under *the government of our parents and friends* we were often very restive, and felt it hard to sin. We wanted to go after our own devices, but our parents loved us, and they would not permit it. Perhaps they were stern; it may be that they chastened us after their own pleasure, as we thought, though if we were wise we might have perceived that it was for our profit. And how some of us kicked and struggled against a mother's tears; and how irksome was a father's good advice! Many men showed in their childhood what they were made of by their early rebellions against the holy admonitions of loving and anxious parents. Oh, young offenders, yours is no small responsibility! Oh how the young heart can rebel! I speak experimentally when I say I believe a young child's heart is capable of as thorough and deep-seated rebellion against God and right as the heart of the oldest man, and though the child may not be able either by word or deed to express what he feels, there are evil moments with some children when passion seems as if it would choke them, and their ravings or sullenness prove that a child's nature is inclined to evil, and is most undoubtedly fallen from its birth. In looking back we see that the goad was used upon us even as children. Since that time some of you have felt the irksome goad in the good advice of friends with whom you have been situated. You do not like to be talked to about religion—some of you. You have half a mind to shift your lodgings to get away from godly people who pester you. You would gladly get another job, for you work at a bench close by the side of a Christian, and he makes sinning uncomfortable to you; he speaks to you very tenderly and plainly, and you jest at him, and put it off, but still he does make it an uneasy thing for you to be what you are. Oh, how grateful you ought to be for this, and yet I should not wonder but what you are kicking at it. These are all goads which God uses. He is saying to you, "You stubborn ox-like man, you shall not go to Hell." He has sent these warnings to you first by one, and then by another, with a view to your good.

Every Doctrine, and every part of the teachings of God's Word, acts like a goad to unconverted men. I have known people come in here; curiosity has brought them to hear the preacher, and his sermon has made them feel so angry that they could almost have knocked him down, but yet they could not help coming again. Why did they come? They could not tell you why, but they could not stop; and yet they hated the

Truth of God they heard. Many of you know, before you were converted, that anger was just your first state of feeling when you heard the Gospel. I feel rather glad when I hear that I have made some people angry. I think within myself, "Well, they were not asleep at any rate, and they gave the sermon some sort of thought." When a man thinks enough about the Truth of God to begin to fight against it, I am in hope that the Truth will give him a shaking, and never let him go till it has fairly beaten him into better things. Angry feeling is better than no feeling, and enmity to the Truth may be looked upon with more hope than indifference. Now what a goad to some men is the Doctrine of the Cross! They cannot hear of the wounds of Jesus and sin pleasantly. To some the Doctrine of the Punishment of Sin is like the file to the viper—they are always breaking their teeth by gnawing at it. There is no part of Scripture which, rightly understood, is not a goad to the sinner, saying to him unmistakably, "Sinner, turn, turn from your wicked ways, for why will you die?"

At times the Lord will goad us in another way, namely, by *personal afflictions.* Perhaps he sends a sickness, and lays the strong man moaning upon his bed. Possibly it is a failure in business, a loss of property, a disappointment in marriage, the death of friends, or a gradual decay of the constitution, or the loss of a limb or an eye. Loud voices these, if men had ears to hear. God does not come to lopping His trees until a stern remedy is needed. Some of you have had so many afflictions that the Lord might well inquire, "Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint," and you are full of wounds and putrefying sores. Oh the mischief that sin has done in some glaring cases! I know a man at the present moment, a man I said, but alas, poor wretched mortal, he looks hardly like a man. I saw him in rags, shivering in the drenching rain but yesterday. He came of reputable parents; I knew his relatives well. He had some 400 pounds or more left him a few years ago. As soon as ever he could get hold of it he came to London, and in about a month he spent it—all in a hideous whirlwind of evil. He went back a beggar and in rags, full of horrible sickness, loathsome and an outcast. Since that time he has been so often aided by his friends that they have entirely given him up, and now this poor wretch with scarcely enough rags to hide his nakedness, has no eyes left to pity him, and no hands to help him. He has been helped again, and again, and again; but to help him appears to be useless, for at the very first opportunity he returns to his old sins. The workhouse, the hospital, the grave are his portion; for he seems unable to rise to the dignity of labor, and no one will harbor him. I could fairly cry at the sight of him, but what can be done for him if he will destroy himself by his sins? If you say to him, "Why do your friends not notice you?" he will tell you, "They cannot notice me."

He has brought his mother to the grave; he has worn out everybody who has pitied him, for his life has been so thoroughly bad that it excites no pity, but disgusts his own relatives. For the love of the Lord Jesus I will help this unhappy man again, and intend tomorrow to see him washed, clothed and fed, and put in a way of livelihood, but I have very

slender hope of being of any lasting service to him, for he has been tried so often. Yet I never saw a wretch in such misery. He is emaciated, ragged, and has known hunger and cold and nakedness month after month, and unless he mends his ways this will be his lot till he dies. We have more than enough of such cases who cross our path, but this one outdoes them all. Now I know that some of these forlorn persons sometimes steal into the Tabernacle, and if such are here let me ask you, What is to be done with you? You put even the best and most tender of persons out of patience with you. Trouble has no power to break you, and kindness no influence to melt you. Oh, while there is a remedy, may God apply it to you, poor guilty souls! There are some who have felt these goadings to the most fearful extent till they have lost all, and yet they cling to their sins. I would to God that saints would cling to Christ half as earnestly as sinners cling to the devil. If we were as willing to suffer for God as some are to suffer for their lusts, what perseverance and zeal would be seen on all sides!

The goad is used yet further. When God has goaded a man with afflictions, and pains, and all the Doctrines of the Gospel, sometimes He stirs him with the common operations of the Holy Spirit in his conscience. Saul was being goaded at that very moment when Christ spoke, and said, "Why do you persecute Me?" Ah, and take care you do not resist these goadings. "See that you refuse not Him who speaks. For if they escaped not who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him who speaks from Heaven." I believe that the Holy Spirit often by what we call the common operations which He exercises upon the hearts of men, deals with men's consciences so far as to awaken and warn them, but they quench the Spirit. They, as Stephen says, resist the Spirit as did their fathers. It is a sin which may be committed, and where it is committed often, and long, at last, the Holy Dove departs never to return—and such a soul is given up. It may be that some man or woman here is the subject of these inward strivings; may they end in effectual calling, and not lead to increased damnation, as they must do except the soul be brought to saving repentance.

III. In the third place—and here let conscience be awake—we have to speak about THE KICKS. "It is hard for you to kick against the pricks."

The ox, when wounded, is so very foolish as to dash its foot against the goad, and consequently drives it deeper into himself and hurts himself even more. This is the natural manner of men till God makes something more than beasts of them. Man is sure, like the ox, to kick against the pricks. How can we do this? *Even when we were children we rebelled against our teachers.* When we were but little and were being instructed in the things of God, it is possible that we did not like religion; prayer was distasteful, Sunday was dull, and the House of God wearisome, and therefore we kicked against them. As some of you grew up who are now present, you took to *sneering* at those who kindly advised you. Many young men, the moment they get a word of counsel from any person, treat that person at once as an enemy, and vow that they will take no further notice of such a "cant," as they will call him.

That is a common way of kicking against the pricks. Many sinners, when the Word of God is too hot for them, take to criticizing it. When a sermon comes home, what is the easiest way of getting rid of the impression? Why, begin disputing over it. If any of you have felt any power in the sermon at any time, and you do not want to get a blessing, begin to raise an objection to some point of Doctrine or expression of the minister. Do not dwell on that part which you felt was good and was meant for you, but give your thoughts to that which you can quarrel over, and the sermon will be of no use to you. Satan will be glad if you begin to blame the preacher when you ought to have blamed yourself! If you cavil at Gospel Doctrines, if you quibble about the high points and the low points, and say, "Well, I do not see how Predestination and free will can agree," all that will be a snare to you, to prevent your coming to Christ.

Satan does not care whether he drags you down to Hell as a Calvinist or as an Arminian, as long as he can get you there. He does not care whether you are orthodox or heterodox, as long as he can make sure of you. A man who is reproved by a sermon will perhaps feel that if it is true he must give up his drunkenness. "But," he says, "I will not give up my drunkenness; I do not want to do that, and therefore I do not believe that the sermon is true." Or another says, "If this is correct, I must shut up my shop on Sunday, and so lose my Sunday's profits. I cannot afford to lose money, and therefore I will criticize the preacher." The guilty conscience cries, "I will pick a hole in the minister's coat, because he has found one in mine. If what he says is true, I must mend my ways; but I do not intend to do that, therefore I will try and find some fault with the Truth which is taught, or with the man who teaches it." There are many individuals who are so angry at God through their sin, that they have come to *persecute God's people.* They cannot burn them, they cannot shut them up in prison—but they vex them with cruel mocking, they twist their innocent actions into something wrong, and then they throw it in their teeth. They even sit down and wantonly invent lies against the innocent, and utter libelous things against the people of God, because they have a conviction that the saints are better than themselves. It seems to be the natural suggestion of our fallen nature that when goodness rebukes us we straightway try to prove that it is not goodness in order that our conscience may be quieted.

Certain profane men have gone so far as to kick at God Himself. They do not hesitate in their malice, but they proclaim it in plain plump oaths, and dare their Maker to do most terrible things to them. Mind that He does not answer you, Blasphemer. He is a hearer of prayer, and when you pray to Him to damn you, He may, one of these days, do it, Sinner! Do not ask Him again lest He should do it at once. He has a way of doing what men ask Him to do; do not trifle with Him. It is His mighty Mercy that has prevented Him from destroying you long ago! This is your way of kicking against the pricks, but I hope that since God has brought you here He means to stop your rebellions today. I pray He may, and that no longer you may kick against Him, but turn to Him and say, "Lord, what will You have me to do?"

IV. Time fails us, and we must therefore speak briefly upon THE RESULT OF KICKING AGAINST THE PRICKS. Christ says, "It is hard for you." Friend, let me hold you by the buttonhole and talk to you. It has been very hard for your mother that you should have gone on as you have done. For her sake, think! With some of you it has been very hard for your families. Drunkenness clothes a man's children in rags as well as himself. It has been hard in some cases with even your neighbors and your employers; they had a deal to put up with; but that is not the matter of consideration this morning. It is hard for *you.* Oh, young man, you know that sin does not make you happy. You have had your swing of it, and you are miserable this morning. Oh no, there is no bliss to be found in evil. At last the Truth of God is beginning to dawn upon your mind. Instead of happiness you have found unrest and dissatisfaction. You are afraid of cholera—afraid to die. You would run almost anywhere to escape an infectious disease, because you know where your portion will be when you enter into another world. This is the effect of your kicking against the pricks. You have brought yourself into an unhappy and uneasy state of mind till you sometimes wish that you had never been born.

Do you know what will very likely be your history if you run into sin and persist in it? You will make your present afflictions grow worse, and cause your present losses to accumulate upon you. You are kicking against the pricks, and are making the wounds already received 10 times worse, and so it will always be as long as you keep on kicking. It is possible that you may get into such a state of mind that you will by-and-by be ready to die by suicide because of remorse. It is hard for you, young man, to be such a sinner as you are now, but how hard it *will* be! I could weep when I think of how hard your sins will be for you if you are ever converted. He who is converted to God finds it hard to have been a sinner so long. His repentance is bitter in proportion to the greatness of his sin. "Alas," he says, "that I should ever have so revolted against the God who loved me with such a Love!" Those who are saved late in life feel that their sins will be their plague till they die. A man does not go and plunge into the ditch of sin without bearing the stench of its vileness in his memory all his life. An old song that you used to sing in your carnal days will come up and defile your closet prayers, and perhaps the recollection of some unholy scene in which you had a part in your younger days will trouble you even when you are at the sacramental table! The Apostle Paul always bore the memory of his sin, for he says, "I was the least of the Apostles because I persecuted the Church of God." He always felt that; and who knows but that the stripes and imprisonment that he had to bear himself must often have brought the tears into his eyes when he endured them as he thought, "I persecuted them in their synagogue, and I compelled them to blaspheme, and now I am called to suffer the same things myself." The past life of a regenerate man will always be his grief. "God forgives me," said one, "but I can never forgive myself. It is blotted out of God's Book, I know, but it can never be blotted out of mine. I shall remember to my dying day what a sinner I have been."

But ah, Friends, if tears might come into my eyes at the recollection of how you will feel if you are converted, I would gladly weep tears of blood as I think of what you will feel if you die unconverted! All these kicks against the pricks will be among your sharpest stings when you feel the Judgment of God in another world. "Remember," says Conscience, "you were warned—you did not sin without knowing it was sin—you did not choose the downward path without understanding it to be the path that led to ruin. You felt the pricks of warning, but you kicked against them, and now you receive your portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, with this aggravation above all others, that you knew your duty but you did it not." That great Italian poet, whose marvelous mind so singularly pictured the lost in their everlasting dwelling place, writes over the portals of Hell, *"All hope abandon you who enter here!"* Ah, it is the Hell of Hell that there is no hope there; but while there is no hope of the future, there are unutterable regrets for the past. My Hearers, I often feel it a very solemn thing to preach to you, and the more earnestly I am able to preach, the more solemn it becomes, because if this Gospel is not "a savor of life unto life" to you, it will be "a savor of death unto death" to your souls. You may make it a holiday to visit the Tabernacle and hear me preach; you may come up from the country and hasten here to see this place as one of the sights of London; but it is no holiday to me to preach to your souls, and no child's play to have this responsibility upon my shoulders, to deal faithfully with your hearts and consciences! I have been a goad, I hope, to many of you, and you have tried hard to continue what you are while a loving heart has tried to bring you into a better mind. But by-and-by the goad will become a sword; the very Gospel which warns will be the Gospel that smites. "God shall judge the world"—how?—"according to my Gospel," says the Apostle Paul. It is according to the Gospel that you shall be judged at the last if you reject it and perish in your sins. This is the result of kicking against the pricks.

V. Then the last thing is THE GOOD COUNSEL. It is just this; since it is hard for you to kick against the pricks, and there is nothing to be got by it, cease, oh cease from your evil way! Why should you do it? If it made you happy to be sinners, I could almost pardon you. If it were a profitable thing, I might almost excuse you; but it is such an unsatisfactory thing, and the happiness is so transient, such mere scum upon the pot, that I cannot excuse you if you will follow it. Your grapes are gall, your wine is wormwood, your music is discord, your mirth is misery; why then follow after them?

O sensible, thoughtful man, kick against the pricks no more! If you do not become a Christian, do not be a persecutor. There is no need to make your eternal portion worse. Suppose you think that the Gospel is not true, at any rate do not fight against it, for if it is of God you cannot prevail against it, and if it is not, it will go down without you. Do not, however, think that we ask you to cease from wrath because we are afraid of you. The Gospel is like an anvil; you may hammer it and it will break your hammer, but itself remain unbroken. You may stumble against this stone and you will be broken, but you cannot break or remove the stone. Woe unto you if that stone falls upon you, for on

whomever this stone shall fall it will grind him to powder. Stop and think. If we can get men to think we may have good hope of them. At any rate religion is worth a thought. If you must and will go to Hell, go there with your eyes open, and do not be deceived. Eternity must be such a weighty thing that it is surely worth a thought. If the devil is worthy to be your master, consider his claims, and serve him thoughtfully. If sin, and drunkenness, and money getting, and Sabbath-breaking are the best things for you, think them over, and give a reason for the hope that is in you. There are some of us who think you foolish; justify your conduct then, and get an answer ready. Oh, if you would but think, you would soon say, "No, no, no, I know there is a God, I know I have sinned, I know that He must punish me; there is mercy in Jesus, I will find it."

Let me say to you, Sinner, *yield your heart to the goadings of Divine Love,* for, "it is hard for you to kick against the pricks." Oh, think not that the Savior's blood will be unable to cleanse you! Not your worthiness, but your unworthiness attracts His attention; not your strength, but your weakness; not your riches, but your poverty. He came to save just such as you are. Lost one, but loved one, trust in Him! Cast yourself now upon Him, having nothing of your own. Come and rest in Him. He will not cast you away. He has never cast any soul away, however filthy its previous life may have been, and He will not begin today to reject sinners. He who comes to Him He will in no wise cast out. "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money, come, buy, and eat! Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Why do you kick against the pricks? "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." "Whoever believe that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Trust Jesus with your whole heart! Trust in Jesus, and your sins, which are many, are forgiven you! This is the Gospel that we are bid to preach, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved."

May God the Holy Spirit give you Divine Grace to be obedient, and unto Him shall be Glory. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 9.

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THE GREAT WHITE THRONE
NO. 710

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, AUGUST 12, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And I saw a great white throne, and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them."
Revelation 20:11.

MANY of the visions which John saw are very obscure, and although a man who is assured of his own salvation may possibly be justified in spending his days in endeavoring to interpret them, yet I am sure of this, that it will not be a profitable task for unconverted persons. They have no time to spare for speculations, for they have not yet made sure of positive certainties. *They* need not dive into difficulties, for they have not yet laid a foundation of simplicities by faith in Christ Jesus. Better far to meditate upon the Atonement than to be guessing at the little horn, and better far to know the Lord Jesus in His power to save, than to fabricate an ingenious theory upon the number of the beast. But *this* particular vision is so instructive, so unattended by serious difficulties, that I may invite all here present to consider it, and the more so because it has to do with matters which concern our own eternal prospects. It may be, if God the Holy Spirit shall illuminate the eyes of our faith to look and see that "Great White Throne and Him who sat upon it," that we may reap so much benefit from the sight as forever to make the arches of Heaven ring with gratitude that we were brought in this world to look at the "Great White Throne," for by so doing we shall not be afraid to look upon it in the day when the Judge shall sit, and the quick and dead shall stand before Him.

I shall, first, *endeavor to explain what John saw;* and then, in the second place, *I shall try to set forth the effect which I think would be produced by this sight if the eyes of our faith should now be fixed on it.*

I. First, then, I have to call your very earnest attention to WHAT JOHN SAW. It was a scene of the Last Day—that wondrous day whose coming none can tell—

"For, as a thief unheard, unseen, it steals
Through night's dark shade."

When the eagle-eyed seer of Patmos, being in the Spirit, looked aloft into the heavens, *he saw a throne,* from which I gather that there is a throne of moral government over the sons of men, and that He who sits upon it presides over all the inhabitants of this world. There is a throne whose dominion reaches from Adam in Paradise down to "the last man," whoever he may be. We are not without a Governor, Lawgiver, and

Judge. This world is not left so that men may do in it as they will, without a legislator, without an avenger, without One to give reward or to inflict punishment. The sinner, in his blindness looks, but he sees no throne; and therefore he cries, "I will live as I like, for there is none to call me to account." But John, with illuminated eyes, distinctly saw a throne, and a personal Ruler upon it who sat there to call His subjects to account. When our faith looks through the glass of Revelation it sees a throne too. It were well for us if we felt more fully the influence of that ever-present throne. That "the Lord reigns" is true, Believer, tonight, and true at all times. There is a throne where sits the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible; the world is governed by laws made and kept in force by an intelligent Lawgiver. There is a moral Governor. Men are accountable, and will be brought to account at the Last Great Day, when they shall all be either rewarded or punished. "I saw a Great White Throne." How this invests the actions of men with solemnity! If we were left to do exactly as we willed without being called to account for it, it were wise, even then, to be virtuous, for rest assured it is best for ourselves that we should be good, and it is in itself malady enough to be evil. But we are not so left. There is a Law laid down, which involves a penalty to break. There is a Lawgiver who looks down and sees every action of man, and who does not allow one single word or deed to be omitted from His notebook. That Governor is armed with power; He is soon coming to hold His assize, and every responsible agent upon the face of the earth must appear at His bar and receive, as we are told, "according to the deeds done in the body, whether they are good or whether they are evil." Let it, then, be gathered from the text that there is in very deed a personal and real moral Governor of the world, an efficient and suitable Ruler, not a mere name, not a myth, not an empty office, but a Person who sits on the throne, who judges right, and who will carry out that judgment before long.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, we know that this moral Governor is God Himself, who has an undisputed *right* to reign and rule. Some thrones have no right to be, and to revolt from them is patriotism; but the best lover of his race delights the most in the monarchy of Heaven. Doubtless there are dynasties which are tyrannies, and governors who are despots; but none may dispute the right of God to sit upon His throne, or wish that another hand held the scepter. He created all, and shall He not judge all? He had a right, as Creator, to lay down His Laws, and, as those Laws are the very pattern of everything that is good and true, He has, therefore, because of this an eternal right to govern, in addition to the right which belonged to Him as Creator. He is the Judge of all, who must do right from a necessity of His Nature. Who else, then, should sit upon the throne, and who shall dare to claim to do so? He may cast down the gauntlet to all His creatures, and say, "I am God, and beside Me there is none else." If He reveals the thunder of His Power, His creatures must silently admit that He is Lord alone. None can venture to say that this throne is not founded upon right. Moreover, there are some thrones on

which kings, however right, are deficient in *might*, but this is not the case with the King of kings. We constantly see little princes whose crowns fit their heads so badly that they cannot keep them on their brows; but our God has invincible might as well as infallible right. Who shall meet Him in battle? Shall the stubble defy the fire, or shall the wax make war with the flame? Jehovah can easily swallow up His enemies when they set themselves in battle array against Him. "Behold, He touches the hills, and they smoke; He looks upon the mountains, and they tremble; He breaks Leviathan in pieces in the depths of the sea. The winds are His chariots, and the tempests are His messengers. At His bidding there is day, and at His will night covers the earth. Who shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, "What are You doing?" His throne is founded in right and supported by might. You have Justice and Truth to settle it, but you have Omnipotence and Wisdom to be its guards, so that it cannot be moved.

In addition to this, His throne is one *from the power of which none can escape*. The sapphire throne of God, at this moment, is revealed in Heaven where adoring angels cast their crowns before it; and its power is felt on earth, where the works of Creation praise the Lord. Even those who do not acknowledge the Divine Government are compelled to feel it, for He does as He wills, not only among the angels in Heaven, but among the inhabitants of this lower world. Hell feels the terror of that throne. Those chains of fire, those unutterable pangs, are the awful shadow of the throne of Deity; as God looks down upon the lost, the torment that flashes through their souls darts from His *Holiness*, which cannot endure their sins. The influence of that throne, then, is found in every world where spirits dwell, and in the realms of inanimate nature it bears rule. Every leaf that fades in the trackless forest trembles at the Almighty's bidding, and every coral insect that dwells in the unfathomable depths of the sea feels and acknowledges the Presence of the All-Present King. So, then, my Brothers and Sisters, if such is the throne which John saw, see how impossible it will be for you to escape from its judgment when the Great Day of Assize shall be proclaimed, and the Judge shall issue His summons bidding you appear. To where can the enemies of God flee? If up to Heaven their high-flown impudence could carry them, His right hand of Holiness would hurl them from there, or, if under Hell's most profound wave they dive, to seek a sheltering grave, His left hand would pluck them out of the fire to expose them to the *fiercer* light of His Countenance!

Nowhere is there a refuge from the Most High. The morning beams cannot convey the fugitive so swiftly as the Almighty Pursuer could follow him; neither can the mysterious lightning flash, which annihilates time and space, journey so rapidly as to escape His far-reaching hand. "If I mount up to Heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Hell, You are there." It was said of the Roman empire under the Caesars that the whole world was only one great prison for Caesar, for if any man offended

the emperor it was impossible for him to escape. If he crossed the Alps, could not Caesar find him in Gaul? If he sought to hide himself in the Indies, even the swarthy monarchs there knew the power of the Roman armies, so that they would give no shelter to a man who had incurred imperial vengeance. And yet, perhaps, a fugitive from Rome might have prolonged his miserable life by hiding in the dens and caves of the earth. But oh, Sinner, there is no hiding from God. The mountains cannot cover you from Him, even if they would, neither can the rocks conceal you. See, then, at the very outset, how this throne should awe our minds with terror. Founded in right, sustained by might, and universal in its dominion, look and see the throne which John of old beheld.

This, however, is but the beginning of the vision. The text tells us that it was a *"white throne,"* and I would call your attention to that. "I saw a Great White Throne." Why white? Does not this indicate its immaculate purity? There is no other white throne, I fear, to be found. The throne of our own happy land, I believe, is as white and as pure as any throne might well be on earth, but there have been years, even in the annals of that throne, when it was stained with blood, and not many reigns back it was black with debauchery. Not always was it the throne of excellence and purity, and even now, though our throne possesses a lustrous purity, rare enough among earthly thrones, yet in the sight of God there must be in everything that is earthly something that is impure, and therefore the throne is not white to Him. As for many other thrones that are still existing, we know that with them all is not white; this is neither the day nor the hour for us to call the princes to the bar of God, but there are some of them who will have much to answer for, because in their schemes of aggrandizement they took no account of the blood which would be shed, or of the rights which would be violated. Principle seldom moves the royal mind, but the knavish law of policy is the basis of king-craft; a policy worthy of highwaymen and burglars, and some kings are little. On the continent of Europe there are not a few thrones which I might describe as either black, or crimson, as I think of the depravfity of the conduct of the monarch, or of the blood through which he has waded his way to dominion.

But this is a Great White Throne, a throne of hallowed monarchy that is not stained with blood nor defiled with injustice. Why, then, is it white for purity? Is it not because the King who sits on it is Pure? Listen to the thrice sacred hymn of the cherubic band and the seraphic choir, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." Creatures who are perfectly spotless, themselves, unceasingly reverence and adore the yet superior Holiness of the Great King. He is too great to need to be unjust, and He is too good to be unkind. This King has done no wrong, and can do no wrong—and He is the only King of whom this can be said without fiction. He who sits on this white throne is Himself the Essence of Holiness, Justice, Truth, and Love. O fairest of all thrones, who would not be a willing subject of your peerless government?

Moreover, the throne is pure because *the Law the Judge dispenses is perfect.* There is no fault in the Statute Book of God. When the Lord shall come to judge the earth, there will be found no decree that bears too harshly upon any of His creatures. "The statutes of the Lord are right." They are true and altogether righteous. That Book of the Ten Commandments in which you find a summary of the Divine Will, who can improve it? Who can find anything in excess in it, or point out anything that is wanting? "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul," and well may that be a white throne from which there emanates such a Law. But you know that with a good law and a good lawgiver, yet sometimes the throne may make mistakes, and it may be stained by ignorance, if not by willful injustice. But the sentence which shall go forth from this Great White Throne shall be so consistent with justice that even the condemned culprit himself must give his unwilling assent to it. "They stood speechless," it is said; speechless because they could neither bear the sentence nor in any way question it. It is a white throne since never was a verdict delivered from it of which the culprit had a right to complain. Perhaps there are some here who view this as a matter of hope, but to ungodly persons it will be the very reverse. Oh Sinner, if you had to be judged before an impure tribunal, you might, perhaps, escape; if the King were not holy, unholiness might, perhaps, go unpunished; if the Law were not perfect, offenses might be condoned; or if the sentence were not just, you might, through partiality, escape. But where everything is so pure and white—

"Careless sinner,
What will become of you?"

I have thought, too, that perhaps this throne is said to be a white throne to indicate that it will be *eminently conspicuous.* You will have noticed that a white object can be seen from a very great distance. You may have observed, perhaps, on the Welsh mountains, a white cottage far away, standing out conspicuously, for the Welsh like to make their cottages intensely white, so that though you would not have perceived it, had it been left of a stone color, you see it at once, for the bright whitewashed walls catch your eye. I suppose that a marksman would prefer a white object to aim at before almost any other color. And this Great White Throne will be so conspicuous that all the millions who were dead, but who shall rise at the sound of the last trumpet, shall all see it, nor shall it be possible for a single eye to close itself against the sight! We *will* see it; it shall be so striking a sight that none of us will be able to prevent its coming before us; "every eye shall see Him." Possibly it is called a white throne because of its being such a *convincing contrast to all the colors of this sinful human life.* There stand the crowd, and there is the Great White Throne. What can make them see their blackness more thoroughly than to stand there in contrast with the perfections of the Law, and the Judge before whom they are standing? Perhaps that throne, all glistening, will reflect each man's character. As each

unforgiven man shall look at that white throne, its dazzling whiteness will overcome him, and cover him with confusion and with terror when he sees his own defilement in contrast with it. "O God!" he says, "how can I bear to be judged by such a One as You are? I could face the judgment seat of my fellows, for I could see imperfections in my judges, but I cannot face You, You dread Supreme, for the awful whiteness of Your Throne, and the terrible splendor of Your Holiness utterly overcome me. Who am I, sinner as I am, that I should dare to stand before that Great White Throne!"

The next word that is used by way of adjective is *"great."* It was a *"Great* White Throne." You scarcely need me to tell you that it is called a Great White Throne because of *the greatness of Him who sits upon it.* Speak of the greatness of Solomon? He was but a petty prince. Speak of the throne of the Mogul or his Celestial Majesty of China, or of the thrones of Rome and Greece before which multitudes of beings assembled? They are nothing, mere representatives of associations of the grasshoppers of the world, who are as nothing in the sight of the Lord Jehovah. A throne filled by a mortal is but a shadow of dominion. This will be a great throne because on it will sit the great God of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell—the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, who shall judge the world in righteousness, and His people with equity. Brothers and Sisters, you will see that this will be a "Great White Throne" when we remember *the culprits who will be brought before it;* not a handful of criminals, but millions upon millions, "multitudes, multitudes, in the Valley of Decision," and these not all of the lesser sort, not serfs and slaves alone whose miserable bodies rested from their oppressors in the silent grave; but the great ones of the earth shall be there; not alone the down-trod serf who toiled for nothing, and felt it sweet to die, but his tyrant master who fattened on his unrewarded toils shall be there; not alone the multitudes who marched to battle at their master's bidding, and who fell beneath the shot and the shell, but the Emperors and Kings who planned the conflict shall be there; crowned heads no greater than heads uncrowned.

Men who were demigods among their fellows shall mix with their slaves, and be made as vile as they! What a marvelous procession! With what awe the imagination of it strikes the heart! What a pompous appearing! Aha! Aha! You downtrodden multitudes, the great Leveler has put you all upon the same footing now! Death laid you in one equal grave, and now Judgment finds you standing at one equal bar to receive the sentence of One who fears no king, and dreads no tyrant, who has no respect of persons, but who deals justice alike to all! Can you picture the sight? Land and sea are covered with the living who once were dead. Hell is empty, and the grave has lost its victims! What a sight will that be! Xerxes on his throne with a million marching before him must have beheld a grand spectacle, but what will this be? No flaunting banner, but the ensigns of eternal majesty. No gaudy courtiers, but assembled

angels! No sound of drum nor roar of cannon, but the blast of the archangel's trumpet, and the harps of ten thousand times ten thousand holy ones. There will be unrivalled splendor it is true, but not that of heraldry and war; mere tinsel and gewgaw shall have all departed, and in their place there shall be the splendor of the flashing lightning, and the deep bass of the thunder. Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, with all His angels with Him shall descend, the pomp of Heaven being revealed among the sons of men.

It will be a *Great* White Throne because of *the matters that will be tried there.* It will be no mere quarrel about a suit in Chancery, or an estate in jeopardy. Our *souls* will have to be tried there; our future, not for an age, not for one single century, but forever and forever. Upon those balances shall hang Heaven and Hell; to the right shall be distributed triumph without end, to the left destruction and confusion without a pause, and the destiny of every man and woman shall be positively declared from that tremendous Throne! Can you perceive the greatness of it? You must measure Heaven; you must fathom Hell, you must compass eternity, but until you can do this you cannot know the greatness of this *Great* White Throne; great, last of all, because throughout eternity there shall always be a looking back to the transactions of that day. That day shall be unto you, you Saints, "the beginning of days," when He shall say, "Come, you blessed of My Father." And that day shall be to you who perish the beginning of days too; just as that famous night of old in Egypt, when the first-born were spared in every house where the lamb had shed its blood, was the first of days to Israel, but to Egypt the night when the first-born felt the avenging angel's sword was a dread beginning of nights forever. Many a mother reckoned from that night when the Destroyer came, and so shall you reckon throughout a dread eternity from the day when you see this *Great* White Throne!

Turn not away your eyes from the magnificent spectacle till you have seen the glorious Person mentioned in the words, *"And Him that sat on it."* I wonder whether anything I have said has made you solemnly think of the great day. I am afraid I cannot speak so as to get at your hearts, and if not, I had better be silent; but do now for a moment think upon Him who sat upon the Great White Throne. The most fitting One in all the world will sit upon that Throne. It will be God, but listen, it will also be Man. "He shall judge the world by this Man, Christ Jesus, according to my Gospel," says the Apostle. The Judge has to be God. Who but God were fit to judge so many, and to judge so exactly? The Throne is too great for any but for Him of whom it is written, "Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is Your scepter." Christ Jesus, the Son of God, will judge, and He will judge as Man as well as God; and how fitting it is that it should be so! As Man He knows our infirmities, He understands our hearts, and we cannot object to this, that our Judge should be Himself like we are. Who better could judge righteous judgment than One who is "bone of our bone and flesh of our

flesh"? And then, there is this fitness about it; He is not only God and Man, but He is *the* Man, the Man of men, of all men the most manly, the type and pattern of manhood. He will be the test in His own Person, for if a man is like Christ, that man is right, but if a man is otherwise than Christ-like, that man deserves to be condemned. That wondrous Judge needs only look upon His own Character to read the Law, and to review His own actions to discern whether other men's actions are right or wrong.

The thoughts of many hearts were revealed by Christ on earth, and that same Christ shall make an open exhibition of men at the Last Great Day. He shall judge them, He shall discern their spirits, He shall find out the joints and the marrow of their being; the thoughts and intents of the heart He shall lay bare. Even you, Believer, will pass the test before Him; let no man deceive you with the delusion that you will not be judged—the sheep appeared before the great dividing Shepherd as well as the goats, those who used their talents were called to account as well as he who buried his pound, and the disciples themselves were warned that their idle words would bring them into judgment. Nor need you fear a public trial. Innocence courts the light. You are not saved by being allowed to be smuggled into Heaven untested and unproved, but you will, in the Righteousness of Jesus, pass the solemn test with joy. It may not be at the same moment as the wicked that the righteous shall be judged (I shall not contend for particulars), but I am clear that they will be judged, and that the blood and Righteousness of Jesus are provided for this very cause, that they may find mercy of the Lord in *that* day. O Sinner! It is far otherwise with you, for your ruin is sure when the testing time comes. There will be no witnesses needed to convict you, for the Judge knows all. The Christ whom you despised will judge you, the Savior whose mercy you trampled on, in the fountain of whose blood you would not wash, the despised and rejected of men—it is He who shall judge righteous judgment to you, and what will He say but this, "As for these, My enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, cut them in pieces before My eyes!"

II. I need a few minutes—and I have but too few left—TO DRAW THE INFERENCES WHICH FLOW FROM SUCH A SIGHT AS THIS, and so turn the vision to practical account.

Believer in Christ, a word in your ear. Can you see the Great White Throne, and Him who sits upon it? I think I see it now. Then *let me search myself.* Whatever profession I may make, I shall have to face that Great White Throne. I have passed the Elders; I have been approved by the pastor; I stand accepted by the Church; but that Great White Throne is not passed yet. I have borne a reputable character among my fellow Christians; I have been asked to pray in public, and my prayers have been much admired, but I have not yet been weighed in the last balances, and what if I should be found wanting! Brother Christian, Sister Christian, what about your private prayers? Can you live in

neglect of the closet, and yet remember that your prayers will be tried before the Great White Throne? Is your Bible left unread in private? Is your religion nothing but a public show and sham? Remember the Great White Throne, for mere pretense will not pass there.

Christian, what about your heart and your treasure? Are you a mere money-hunter? Do you live as others live? Is your delight in the fleeting present? Do you have dealings with the Throne of Heaven? Have you a stony heart towards Divine things? Have you little love to Christ? Do you make an empty profession, and nothing more? Oh, think of that Great White Throne, that Great White Throne! Why, there are some of you, who, when I preach a stirring sermon, feel afraid to come again to hear me. Ah, but if you are afraid of my voice, how will you bear *His* voice who shall speak in tones of thunder? Do searching sermons seem to go through you like a blast of the north wind, chilling your very marrow and curdling your blood? Oh, but what must it be to stand before that dread tribunal? Are you doubting now? What will you do then? Can you not bear a little self-examination? How will you bear that God-examination? If the scales of earth tell you that you are lacking, what message will the scales of Heaven give you? I do warn you, fellow professors, speaking to you as I desire to speak now to my own heart, "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?"

Having spoken a word to the Christian, I should like to say to every one of you, *in remembrance of this Great White Throne, shun hypocrisy*. Are you tempted to be baptized though you are not a Believer, in order to please parents and friends? Beware of that Great White Throne, and think how your insult to God will look at that Last Great Day! Are you persuaded to put on the cloak of religion because it will help your business, or make you seem respectable? Beware, you hypocrite, beware of that Great White Throne; for of all the terrors that shall come forth from it, there shall be none more severe than those which shall scathe the mere professor who made a profession of religion for gain. If you must be damned, be damned any way than as a hypocrite; for they deserve the deepest Hell who for gain make a profession of godliness. The ruin of By-Ends and Hypocrisy will be just indeed. O you high-flying professors, whose wings are fastened on with wax, beware of the sun which will surely pour its heat upon you, for fearful will be your fall from so great a height!

But there are some of you who say, "I do not make any profession of religion." Still my text has a word to you. Still *I want you to judge your actions by that Last Great Day*. O Sir, how about that night of sin? "No," you say, "never mind it; bring it not to my mind." It shall be brought to your remembrance, and that deed of sin shall be published far wider than upon the housetops, proclaimed to all the multitudes who have ever lived since the first man, and your infamy shall become a byword and a proverb among all created beings. What do you think of this, you secret

sinners? Ah, young man, you have commenced by stealing, but you will go on to be a downright thief. It is known, Sir, and, "be sure your sin will find you out." Young woman, you have begun to dally with sin, and you think none has seen you, but the most Mighty One has seen your acts and heard your words; there is no curtain between Him and your sin. He sees you clearly, and what will you do with these sins of yours that you think have been concealed? "It was many years ago," you tell me. Yes, but though buried these many years to you, they are all alive to *Him*, for everything is present to the All-Seeing God; and your forgotten deeds shall one day stand out present to you, also. My Hearers, I implore you, do nothing which you would not do if you thought God saw you, for He does see you. Oh, look at your actions in the light of the Judgment. Oh, that secret drinking of yours, how will that look when God reveals it? That private lust of yours which nobody knows of; how would you dare to do it if you remembered that God knows it? Young man, it is a secret, a fearful secret, and you would not whisper it in anyone's ear; but it shall be whispered—no, it shall be *thundered* out before the world! I pray you, Friend, think of this! There is an Observer who takes notes of all that we do, and will publish all to an assembled universe.

And as for us all, are we ready to meet that Last Great Day? I had many things to say to you, but I cannot keep you to say them now, lest you grow weary; but if tonight the trumpet should be sounded, what would be your state of mind? Suppose that now every ear in this place should be startled with a blast most loud and dread, and a voice were heard—

"Come to judgment,
Come to judgment, come away"?

Supposing some of you could hide in the vaults and in the foundations, would not many of you rush to the concealment? How few of us might go down these aisles walking steadily into the open air and saying, "I am not afraid of judgment, for 'there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.'" Brothers and Sisters, I hope there are some of us who could go gladly to that Judgment Seat, even if we had to traverse the jaws of Death to reach it. I hope there are some of us who can sing in our hearts—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day
For who anything to my charge shall lay?
While, through Your blood, absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and blame."

It might put many of us much about to say that. It is easy to speak of full Assurance, but, believe me, it is not quite so easy to have it in earnest in trying times. If some of you get the finger-ache your confidence oozes out at your joints, and if you have but a little sickness you think, "Ah, it may be cholera, what shall I do?" If you cannot bear to die, how, then, will you bear to live forever? Could you not look Death in the face without a shudder—then how will you endure the Judgment? Could you gaze upon Death, and feel that he is your friend and not your foe? Could you put a

skull upon your dressing table as a reminder that you will die? Oh, it may well take the bravest of you to do this, and the only sure way is to come as we are to Jesus, with no righteousness of our own to trust to, but finding all in Him! When William Carey was about to die, he ordered to have put upon his tombstone this verse—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall.
He is my Strength, my Righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All."

I would like to wake up in Eternity with such a verse as that in my mind, as I wish to go to sleep in this world with such a hope as that in my heart—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the Cross I cling."

Ah, I am talking about what some of us will know more of, perhaps, before this week is over. I am speaking now upon themes which you think are a long way off, but a moment may bring them near. A thousand years is a long time, but how soon it flies! One almost seems, in reading English history, to go back and shake hands with William the Conqueror; a few lives soon bring us even to the flood. You who are getting on to be 40 years old, and especially you who are 60 or seventy, must feel how fast time flies. I only seem to preach a sermon one Sunday in time to get ready for the next. Time flies with such a whirl that no express train can overtake it, and even the lightning flash seems to lag behind it. We shall soon be at the Great White Throne; we shall soon be at the judgment bar of God. Oh, let us be getting ready for it. Let us not live so much in this present, which is but a dream—an empty show—but let us live in the real, substantial future. Oh that I could reach some heart here tonight! I have a notion that I am speaking to someone here who will not have another warning. I am sure that with such throngs as crowd here Sunday after Sunday, I never preach to the same congregation twice. There are always some here who are dead between one Sunday and another. Out of such masses as these it must be so according to the ordinary computation.

Who among you will it be who will die this week? Oh, ponder the question well! Who among you will dwell with the devouring flames? Who among you will abide with everlasting burnings? If I knew you I would gladly bedew you with tears! If I knew you who are to die this week, I would gladly come and kneel down at your side, and implore you to think of eternal things. But I do not know you, and therefore by the living God I do implore you all to fly to Jesus by faith. These are no trifles, Sirs, are they? If they are, I am but a sorry trifler, and you may go your ways and laugh at me; but if they are true and real, it becomes me to be in earnest, and much more does it become you to be in earnest. "Prepare to meet your God!" He comes! Prepare now! "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation!" The gates of Mercy are not closed. Your sin is not

unpardonable. You may yet find mercy. Christ invites you. His blood cries to you—

"Come and welcome,
Come and welcome,
Sinner, come."

Oh, may the Holy Spirit put life into these poor words of mine, and may the Lord help you to come now. The way to come, you know, is just to trust in Christ. It is all done when you trust in Christ, throw yourselves right on Him, having nothing else to trust to. See now, my whole weight leans on the front of this platform. Should this rail give way, I fall. Lean on Christ just in that way—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude."

If you can get a grip of the Cross, and stand there beneath the crimson canopy of the Atonement, God Himself cannot smite you, and the Last Great Day shall dawn upon you with splendor and delight, and not with gloom and terror.

I must send you away, but not until all Believers present have given you an invitation to return to the Lord Jesus. To do this we will sing the following verses—

"Return, O wanderer, to your home.
Your Father calls for you!
No longer now an exile roam
In guilt and misery,
Return, return!
Return, O wanderer, to your home,
'Tis Jesus calls for you!
The Spirit and the bride say,
Come!
Oh now for refuge flee;
Return, return.
Return, O wanderer, to your home,
'Tis madness to delay!
There are no pardons in the tomb,
And brief is Mercy's day.
Return! Return!"

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A FEAST FOR FAITH
NO. 711

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1866
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"This also comes forth from the Lord of Hosts,
Who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working."
Isaiah 28:29.

ISAIAH admired the farmer's skill in his calling. He mentions with admiration the various methods adopted by the farmer in the rotation of crops, in the choice of different soils for certain seeds, in the methods of binding up and stowing away his produce; and he enlarges especially upon the different methods of threshing which were used by the Orientals, some tender grain being threshed out by a staff in a man's hand, and others being dragged out of the husk by coarser means, such as by being trampled upon by the feet of oxen, pressed by the turning of a cart wheel upon them, or by the dragging them through a sharp threshing instrument having teeth. He considered, I suppose, that the art of agriculture was in a high state of perfection; I wonder what he would say if he could observe it now, and see the wonderful machines which no sooner go into a field or a brickyard than they accomplish with ease in a few hours that which was once the labor of days or even weeks! Certainly he would exclaim with even greater emphasis than he did concerning the agriculture of his own day—"This also comes forth from the Lord of Hosts."

The sentiment of the text on its surface is, that *the art, and science, and skill of man, are the gifts of God.* The Prophet instances only agriculture, but the same principle applies to all the arts and manufacturing, and in a higher degree still to those more sublime sciences which elevate the human mind and make us acquainted with the majestic and mysterious powers of Nature. We are bound to trace human wisdom up to Divine Wisdom, even in those things which have no relation to the eternal interests of men, but which have a beneficial influence upon their present state. We read of Bezalel, the son of Uri, that the Lord said, "I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship. To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship." Then it is added, "and in the hearts of all who are wise-hearted I have put wisdom." We are to ascribe the thoughtful, inventive mind, and the dexterous, clever hand, to Him who is the great Instructor of man. We trace directly to God the marvelous philosophy of Newton, and the skill of Watt and Stevenson, because the very slightest consideration shows us that there was originally a peculiarity in the constitution and formation of such minds as theirs. The most of us could have done nothing of the kind if we had tried all our days. There may be men of inventive genius here, but I suppose that nine out of ten of us can make no pretense to the

possession of anything of the sort, and therefore we are led to ask, "Where did the faculty come from?"

Surely the fertile brain of invention must be the Creator's gift. A later Providence also has a hand in the business, for many men whose minds would naturally have gone in the direction of invention, are turned into quite another course by the force of circumstances—

"Chill penury repressed their noble rage,
And chilled the genial current of their soul."

It was surely God's Providence which in other cases found a channel for the natural passion, and allowed the soul to flow as it willed. And how often, too, some of the greatest inventions have been due to the simplest accidents! The puffing of steam from a kettle, or the falling of an apple from a tree have led thoughtful minds to discover great and important truths, and who shall attribute these circumstances to any but to Him, who "works all things according to the counsel of His will," and who gives wisdom to the wisest of the sons of men? Let us adore the Mighty God, not only as we read our Bibles, but as we traverse the halls of art and science, and visit the exhibitions which in these days of ours are being reared on every side. Let us make man's skill speak to us of God's Glory, and as we look upon them, instead of saying, "Great are you, O man! And great are the marvels of your genius," let us say, "Great are You, O God, in thus instructing man, and guiding him to those principles and properties of matter, by the knowledge of which his mortal existence is cheered and brightened."

The drift of the writer of the text is this—*if God thus instructs man in wisdom, how wise must He be Himself!* If the mere rays which come from Him convey to us so much light that we are perfectly astonished at what man can do, what must be the Infinite Wisdom in counsel, and the excellence of works which are to be discovered in God Himself! If the human mind at last has linked two far-divided continents together, and annihilated space and time, and even made the old ocean to be the preserver rather than the destroyer of the slender line along which the fluid lightning flashes at man's bidding—if man has bridged the mightiest rivers, and has forced his roads through pathless forests and rocky mountains, being taught to do so by God, then what cannot God do? If the pupil, the poor puny pupil, can accomplish these marvels, what cannot the Master perform? Must He not be wonderful in His counsel? Must He not be excellent in His works? Thus the Prophet conducts our mind from man to God. I wish that all teachers did the same; but how many there are whose main business appears to be to divert the mind *from* God, and to ignore His Existence!

There are two things which shall occupy our attention this morning; the first is—*the vision of God which the text presents to us,* and the second is—*the lesson which such a vision is calculated to teach us.*

I. First, let us behold THE VISION OF GOD WHICH IS PRESENTED TO US IN THE TEXT.

The Lord of Hosts is seen by the enlightened eye, first of all, in His council-chamber, and then in His great workshop, and in both He is the subject of prophetic admiration; He is "wonderful in counsel." He is "excellent in working."

Let us remark at the outset that *it is clear from the text that God does not work without a plan.* God has not left the world to *chance*. There are some men who are always kicking against the Doctrine of an Eternal Purpose, and who grow angry if you assert that God has settled what shall occur. It is by the consent of all agreed that man is foolish if he works without a plan, and yet they cry out when we insist that God also, in all His working, is fulfilling a well-arranged design. Depend upon it, however, let men rebel against this Truth of God as they will, that God has determined the end from the beginning. He has left no screw loose in the machine, He has left nothing to chance or accident. Nothing with God is the subject of an "if," or a "perhaps," but even the agency of man, free as it is, as untouched and undisturbed as if there were no God, even this is guided by His mysterious Power, and works out thoroughly His own Purpose in every jot and tittle. He wings the thunderbolt, and shall He not guide the most passionate spirit? He puts a bit into the mouth of the whirlwind, and shall He not control the most ambitious will? He takes care that even the sea shall come no farther than He bids it, and shall not the heart of man be equally subject to the Divine Purpose? Yielding to man his free agency, giving to him his responsibility, leaving him as free as if there were no purpose and no decree, yet the Eternal Jehovah works out His Plans, and achieves His Purpose to the praise of His Glory.

The great principle of the text is that *God has a Plan, and that this Plan is wonderful in itself, and is found to be excellent when it is carried out.* This may be illustrated in many ways, and let us remark at once that *it is illustrated in Nature.* All Creation is full of traces of a Divine Design. It is true that the Lord took no counsel with His angels, nor sought direction from any beings. "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him?" He alone meted out the heavens with a span, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; but they were weighed and measured, and nothing was made without the most accurate calculation. Even that which appears to us to be irregular in the Divine work is only undiscovered order. The stars seem cast about upon the floor of Heaven as men might fling gold dust from their hands; yet there is not a single star whose place might be altered without mischief to the whole arrangement. Who has studied astronomy who does not know that the size of every planet, its place in the solar system, the density of its matter, the length of its year, and everything connected with it, is arranged upon a scale so accurate that they can be calculated by the mathematician with the utmost ease? Such is the Wisdom manifested in the arrangement of those ponderous orbs of Heaven. And here on earth is it not one of the clearest arguments for Godhead that design is visible everywhere?

Take the meanest animal, or the most minute insect, and you will find in it the most admirable contrivances to suit the habits of the creature and to make it happy in its condition. No, these creatures not only show design, but supply proof that the design is excellent in its working, for every fish that passes through the paths of the sea declares in its easy and graceful motion that the plan of its formation works admirably, and so with every bird and beast. No creature has to go to its Creator and complain, "There is a defect in my structure; I cannot carry out the end

for which I was designed." Our own bodies, too, so curiously worked, full of nerves and muscles, the matchless needlework of God's patient fingers, have about them, if we did but observe them, ten thousand proofs of the surpassing foresight and masterly art of the great Maker. Oh that being so wondrously made by God we might feel bound to show forth His praise!

Beloved Friends, a second illustration of this Truth of God may very easily be drawn from *Providence*. The great Providential operations of God are all the result of His fore-determined Purpose and Decree. From the first moment when Hiddekel and Euphrates, with their silvery flood, rolled joyously through the midst of Paradise, rippling over sands of gold, down to the Last Great Day when the mighty angel shall stand upon the sea and upon the earth, and swear by Him that lives forever and ever that time shall be no longer, everything that has moved or shall move in Heaven, and, Earth, and Hell, has been, is, and shall be according to the counsel and foreknowledge of God, fulfilling a Purpose holy, just, wise, and unalterable. The whole poem of Providence, when it shall be read in the light of Eternity, shall be found worthy of the Infinite Mind. Even that part of human history which has been already written, though it may appear unintelligible at first sight, when it comes to be thoroughly studied has an explanation very near at hand. Did not God, age by age, prepare the world for the coming of the Lord Jesus in the flesh, and is He not now preparing it for His Second Coming in His Glory? All the way up till now every lover of the Lord will see that the awful wheels of Providence have worked with excellent regularity. Empires have fallen, but the Truth of God has risen. Dynasties have perished, but immortal principles have conquered. Slaughter has sown her seed in crimson furrows, but Liberty has ultimately reaped the golden harvest. Famine and Pestilence have made the earth to quake beneath their terrible footsteps when they came as messengers of the avenging God, but flowers of goodness have sprung up in their awful tracks. The most fearful calamities have hidden us beneath their wings from calamities yet greater. The mischief of a day has begotten for us blessings which have endured for ages. God has shown in Providence, even until now, that He is wonderful in design and excellent in working.

But, Believer, perhaps you will be more interested if I say that *your own personal experience of that Providence* goes to prove this with equal clearness. Oh, how wondrous in design has God been in His dealings with you! You have felt many trials, and you are not able to understand the reason of it all; you have been sitting down by the side of the vast sea of Providence, and you have been asking—Why this? And Why that? And trying to fathom the mystery with the shallow line of your own judgment; but depend upon it that the need for all that you have suffered has been most accurately determined by God. You must have seen that He overrules all things for your good. Have you not to thank God today, you gray-headed saints, for the afflictions of your youth? And as to the trials of your riper years, can you not say of them, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word"? You lost a friend once, but you never knew how much you gained by that loss, nor how much misery that trial spared you. Some of you might never have been saved at all were it not that, like Manasseh, you were taken among the thorns. You

had determined to live and die a worldling, and if the house in which you lived so comfortably had not been consumed with fire you would have dwelt there still; but now you are a stranger and a sojourner, and are looking for "a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Happily for you, you did not see the plan of your life when you commenced it; but equally happy for you is it that there was such a plan, that your life has been arranged on the best possible principles, so that if you had been gifted with unerring wisdom, you would have arranged a life for yourselves exactly similar to the one through which you have passed. I know you will say, "Well, to begin with, I would not have been born a child of poverty if I could have helped it; I would have prospered in business if I could have had my own way; I would have been in quite another locality from that in which I now reside if I could have had my own choosing." Yet, be persuaded that in every deviation from your past lot, you would have been rushing into peril, and the happy results of which you will have to sing in Heaven might have been prevented had there been an alteration in any degree in God's dealings with you.

Many of you will be more pleased with another illustration. The wondrous planning of the excellent Worker is plainly seen in *the great economy of Redemption*. Well may angels desire to look into the scheme by which God ordained that fallen man should rise by his fall, and should rise by a means similar to that by which he fell; while God should be glorified even more than if sin had never entered. Redemption is the most Divine of God's thoughts. It is marvelous that He should give His own Son to be Incarnate for the sake of His creatures; that God the mighty Maker should appear in human flesh and become a Man, so that fallen, sinful, and miserable man might be lifted up, and become the son of God. What a dream was that of Jacob when he saw the ladder, the foot of which rested upon the earth, and the top reached up to the seventh Heaven! That dream is more than realized when I see the foot of the ladder in the Humanity of Christ, fixed in Bethlehem's manger, or if you will, at Calvary's Cross, and then behold the top of that ladder reaching up to the Eternal Throne, where He reigns as "God over all, blessed forever," who was also "the Son of Man." When I look at each of the rungs of that ladder, and see the proofs of Divine Love in the Savior's sighs and tears, and bloody sweat, and Passion, and death, I am lost in wonder! Truly it is a matchless scheme by which Justice has its due, and Mercy has its sway, by which Vengeance is satisfied, Holiness is gratified, and yet Love and Mercy, uncontrolled and unlimited, sway their silver scepter among the sons of men. When I see this great sight, those words of Isaiah's ring with a bell-like music in my ears, "He is wonderful in counsel."

But, Beloved, when you see Redemption worked out, and when you think that God really gave His only Son and that this Son actually did come to Bethlehem, really lived among the sons of men, bowed His neck to the yoke of obedience, and gave His hands to the nails, and His side to the spear—that His death was no fiction, but a grand reality—when you see that Redemption completed by the Resurrection of the Master, and hear the angelic shouts as He ascends on high, leading captivity captive, and see Heaven lit up with a supernal splendor as He mounts to His well-earned Throne, you then find that He is as wonderful in the carrying

out of Redemption as He is in the proposing of it, that He is wonderful in counsel, and that He is also excellent in working.

Then, Brothers and Sisters, turning from Redemption itself, look at the Gospel, and see how wonderful in counsel God was in that matter. If we were to hold a parliament of the wise men of England to settle the Gospel, I will undertake to declare now what the Gospel would be. I am sure as to the result; the majority of the members would decide that the gospel to be preached should be this—That men should be exhorted to do their best to "live righteously, honestly, and soberly in this present evil world," And then, through the merits of Christ, God would accept their lives, and they would be saved. Now, that happens NOT to be the Gospel, but the Law—or rather it is neither Law nor Gospel, but a mixture of both, which God despises, for it is neither hot nor cold, and He spits it out of His mouth as an abhorred thing. The Apostle Paul peremptorily, over and over again, tells us that salvation is not by works; no, he tells us that it is not by works and Divine Grace put together, either; he testifies that the two principles neutralize and kill each other, and that a man must either be saved wholly as the result of God's favor, or else he must be saved altogether as the result of his own merit, for the two principles cannot in any way be combined. The Gospel which we have to preach is just the reverse of what human wisdom would advise. It is not, "do and live," but "believe and live."

Now I will show you in a moment that the gospel, which the world would propose, would be a most absurd gospel, because it would be of no service to the very persons who need it the most. Those who walk righteously, honestly, and soberly, may be put down as those who "have no need of a physician." Why, then, prescribe a medicine for them? Where would the Gospel be for the sick? As for the men who feel their guilt before God, and their inability to conquer sin, what am I to say to them if the world's gospel is the true one? I can say nothing at all to them upon this supposition, but must leave them to their destruction! If I find them lying upon the bed dying, or if I meet with them in the hour of extremity, I can have no word of comfort to whisper in their ear at all, but can only remind them that if they had lived righteously, honestly, and soberly, things would have been different with them, which is not good news but a rebuke! But now I can come to all men, whoever they may be, sunken in degradation and steeped in vice, and say to them, "In the name of God trust Christ, and you shall be saved! The past shall be forgiven you, and as you trust Christ there shall come flashing into your soul a new life which shall make you hate the sins which have been your ruin, and make you love the ways of truth and righteousness. You shall be saved as the result of God's free favor, and the proof of it shall be that you shall be saved from the power of sin and purified from your iniquities." This Gospel seems to me to be wonderful in its counsel because it is suited to the most abject and the most depraved; and I am a witness, among thousands of others, that it is excellent in its working.

The other system I spoke of would be bad in its working. Many preachers have had to confess the uselessness of mere moral preaching; one of them said he preached up honesty till his parish swarmed with thieves. There is no instance, I believe, on record, where the mere preaching of the Law made a man love God, or where the heart ever was,

or ever could be, renewed by preaching good works. As well hope to make a dark-skinned person white by pelting him with snowballs. But if it were right to do so, we could point out cases in this house this morning by scores, where the preaching of the Savior's Love and the testimony of a free salvation for the undeserving has melted the heart, has changed the morals, has in fact produced such an effect that the drunk loves sobriety, that the harlot has become chaste, and that the most abandoned are saved. The Gospel plan is excellent in its working. The other plan, which looks as if it would repress vice, pulls up the very floodgates of it, for what you command a man not to do, that he will do; but when you come to him, not with a command, but with a sweet invitation of love, and with wooing words of comfort, bidding him look to Jesus and live, then the command which was irksome and impossible before becomes an easy yoke.

I must hardly tarry longer to illustrate this great principle, or otherwise I might have spoken upon God's Plan and God's Work *in inward experience.* The experience of every Christian is, in some respects, different from the experience of every other, but it is still the result of God's Plan. Your being led through a certain state of deep depression and of severe mental exercise is down in the Book; and as for my Brother yonder, his being led through a state of exultation and rapturous delight is down in the Plan too; and it is right, that in one case you should have defeat, and that in the other case you should enjoy triumph. My Brother shall be made a perfect man in Christ Jesus by his joys—some excellencies will be in him which nothing but joy could have fostered; you also shall be brought to spiritual development by your sorrows, and some powers shall be in you which nothing but sorrow could ever have educated in your case. The experiences of God's servants are very like the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness—they were led here, and there, and roundabout, and yet their road was the best way to Canaan. Sometimes a straight line is not the shortest distance between two places; it is in mathematics, but it is not in experience, for there may be something between through which a straight line could not be drawn. There may be something in you which renders it necessary that God should not lead you in a straight line, and it may be best for you, to avoid some obstacles by going round about.

Another illustration will be found in *the use of instrumentality.* It is a wonderful design of God to use one man to be the means of the conversion of another, because the man who does the work is as much benefited as the man upon whom the work is done. It is a great means of Divine Grace to the minister to be allowed to preach as well as a great means of Grace to the hearers to be able to hear. The Sunday school teacher is as much benefited as are his scholars, and all of you who are watering others shall be watered yourselves. It is a wise thing on the part of God to use the Christian for the good of others because it tends to edification. And then how excellent it is in working! I am sure there is nothing more excellent than when a Church is all at work. Then you see the excellencies of instrumentality—no quarrellings, no bickering, no jealousies, all are active. But let the same Christians have nothing to do, and straightway they meet with that black master who is said always to find work for idle people; they begin snarling, they become cantankerous

and full of bitterness, and find fault, first with all the world in general, and then with their Brethren in particular, and lastly with themselves. No man is so near to the utmost extremity of misery as that man who has nothing to do. "How died so and so?" asked one. "He died of having nothing to do," was the answer. "Ah," said the other, "that is enough to kill any of us!" And so it is; let us escape from such a calamity. It is wise in God's counsel to use instrumentality, and it is excellent in working when it comes to be carried out.

I must not, however, weary you with these illustrations. I will only say that the best illustration of all will be when, at the last, *God's counsels shall be perfectly fulfilled.* The end is coming. Although the ages may appear to drag their weary length along, yet he who looks upon them after God's fashion considers them to be but as a watch in the night; in a few more days the whole of God's Purposes, with regard to the race of men here below, will be fulfilled; the last messenger of Mercy will have delivered his message, and the last Elect soul will have received it. The time shall come when the last vessel of Mercy shall be taken out from among the ruins of the Fall, and set in its place where Jesus dwells. Then comes the end, and when that end comes, we shall read, as far as may be, the whole of God's purpose as one grand poem, and there will not be one verse in it that has a syllable too much, or a word too little; there will not be one stanza or canto redundant, much less one that is erased, but from beginning to end we shall see the master pen and the Mastermind drawing forth the glorious array of majestic thoughts; and with angels, seraphs, principalities, and powers, we shall burst forth into one mighty song—"Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" We shall see how from the first even to the last, the King has been sitting upon the floods and ruling all things according to His own will. "From seeming evil still evoking good, and better still, and better still in infinite progression," to the praise of His own Glory forever and ever.

II. This being the Doctrine of the text, I now want, as God shall help me, to give you SOME OF THE LESSONS FROM IT.

Believe me, I have not laid down this Doctrine in order that it may be a bed for you to stretch yourselves upon, nor even that it may be a blanket for you to wrap yourselves in, but I have done it with a practical purpose in view.

First, I have a word to say *to those unconverted persons who have some desire after salvation.* Dear Hearers, I would to God that, seeing His counsel is so wondrous, *you would agree to it.* It is in His counsel that sinners shall be saved by Grace through believing in Christ. You have been setting up your own notion. You say that sinners should be saved by getting themselves into a state of gloominess; that sinners should be saved by humbling their minds. At least, that is what I suppose you are saying, for you say you cannot be saved because you do not feel enough, that is to say, your plan is that you should be saved as sinners, prepared to be saved, and God's plan is that you should be saved just as you are. He wills to deal with you just where you now are, in your spiritual blindness, ignorance, hardness of heart, or whatever else may be the form of your spiritual malady; His plan is that you should look to Jesus as you are, and that, looking, you should live. You will find this plan of

God's not only wise in counsel, but also excellent in working. I have tried it, and therefore I can speak experimentally. It is a blessed way of salvation, that way of, "Look and live," but the blessedness of it must be felt to be understood. I looked to Him and was lightened, and many, many, many around me have done the same, and could rise up now and sing the hymn—

"I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad."

You gave your mental assent to the principle which I laid down, that God is wonderful in His Design, and excellent in working out His Design; oh that you might give your heart's consent to this Truth of God, and say, "Yes, Lord, it is a good way of salvation. I yield myself to it; Lord, work salvation in me; I will from now on have nothing to do with my own merit and strength; I will be dead, Lord, that You may live in me; I will be nothing, that You may be my All in All." Oh, I am happy, I am thrice happy, if a soul is now agreeing to that! O Heart! You shall see His face, for when you accept Him it is a clear proof that He has long ago loved you, and when you are agreed with Him it is because He determined that you should be a sheep of His pasture.

Another word, and this is not to the sinner, but *to you the people of God.* You believe that God is wise in His counsel, and excellent in His working, and you did not kick against the Truth as I laid it down—did you? Now I want you *to agree to this in your own particular case.* I know there are some of you here who, when it comes to the point, believe it as a Doctrine, but you do not believe it in your own case. You say, "I cannot understand God's dealings with me." As if it were expected that you should! But you also add, "I cannot believe that God has good designs in it." My dear Friend, you must believe it, or else—what? Shall I dare to say it?—Yes, I will say it: John said that if a man did not believe God, he made God a liar, and so you who do not believe in God's Wisdom make Him a fool! Do you not shrink from that? I know you must. You do in effect, when you doubt the Wisdom of Providence, make God out to be a blunderer, or else to be unkind! Would you do either? No, your heart is shocked at the idea. It is all right, then, my Sister; it is all right, my Brother; there cannot be a doubt of it, can there? If our business is in His hands, it will all come right. *You* cannot get the rudder round; the vessel will go on the wrong tack; but *He* can do it. *He* knows how to get to the point that you are aiming at, and that He is aiming at, and He will get you there even as sailors get their vessels to where they want to go by tacking about. So will it be with you. Your course is all mapped out by your Lord. Nothing will take Him by surprise. There will be no novelties to Him. There will be no occurrences which He did not ordain, and for which, therefore, He has not provided. He has arranged all, and you have but to patiently wait and you shall sing a song of deliverance.

But these are not the lessons I wanted to teach. They are both valuable, but I now *desire to speak to those of my Brothers and Sisters who are my fellow workers.* The workers and the sufferers are the cream of the Church. Workers, here is a lesson for you. I will try to learn it myself. It is this—*when we are going to work for God do not let us be in such a mighty hurry.* I know our slow-going friends will like that advice,

but I do not mean what they think I do. Do not let us seem to encourage them in their laziness by making blunders through being hasty, for they will be sure to say, "Ah, you should have been as slow as we are, and you would not have fallen into these errors." Just so, but it is better to do good and blunder than to lie and rot in idleness. Brother workers, let us have a well-formed plan, and let it be God's Plan. Very frequently I am afraid that we sketch out our plan ourselves, and if we do that without waiting upon God we are not walking in the path of faith, we are not bringing in Him who is "wonderful in counsel" to our help, and we must not, therefore, expect to have Him who is "excellent in working" for our assistance. We must do God's work in His own way. Sitting with Mary at the Master's feet is the very best preparation for doing the work which Martha did without being "cumbered" by it. Oh, when I know that I am following and not leading, that I am not running before God's cloud, and like a fool, hunting out my own way in the wilderness, but I see that I have His footsteps before me, it is happy and safe walking. Friends may say, "Ah, rash young man, you are risking so much," and Unbelief may cry, "Let me see the pounds, shillings, and pence, and we can go on," but Faith cries, "If it is God's way I know I am no fool; I know I am safe."—

"'Tis safer, Lord, to trust in Thee,
And on Your care depend,
Than trust in men of high degree,
Or even have kings our friend."

God never fails the man who, in simple, child-like faith, rests entirely upon Him. Have you never noticed that when you are content to wait for God's plan it opens up to you very wonderfully? You could not have opened it up, you did not understand it, but He cleared the way; instead of laying awake all night, how much better to go to sleep, and wake up in the morning, and find that God has done all for you. Faith goes forward in the name of God, and the gates of iron open to her through Divine Strength. Let not your wisdom misguide you; your folly will not if your wisdom does not. Let not your strength make you weak, and then your weakness will be no hindrance.

Do not imagine, when you have learned God's Plan, that you will understand it—for it was not meant for you to understand. I do not suppose that the most of the bricklayers who are employed by our great builders understand at all what the house which they are building is to be like. Very likely nine out of ten of those who go up the ladder with the troughs of mortar, or stand on the scaffolding with their trowels at work, have no idea as to whether the building is to come out Gothic or Grecian. They have nothing to do with that; they have merely to carry their mortar and to lay the bricks, and do their day's work. This is just what you and I have to do. Whether the Lord may leave me to carry out the work, or whether He may take me off and put others to accomplish His Design, should be the same to me; I have but to do my daily work, and to trust the Great Architect who is, "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working," that though I may not know it, He will most certainly bring out the best results from the accumulated labors of all His servants.

Again, when we do know God's Plan, *we must remember to carry it out,* for that same God who is "wonderful in counsel" is also "excellent in working." Do not sit down and be so pleased with the plan that you never try it. I must confess that I like to see a well-thumbed Bible better than

more dainty copies, because I see that it has been used. When you see a plan in an architect's office that is very new and very pretty to look at, you say, "Ah, nothing has been done with it." But when you see a plan that is smudgy, and torn, and almost broken through where it has been folded, you know that the man has done something with it. Now, do not fall in love with the plan, and think it is very pretty, but never carry it out. When Dr. Guthrie wanted his Ragged-schools founded, he called on a certain minister, who said, "Well you know, Mr. Guthrie, there is nothing very new in your scheme; I and Mr. So-and-So have been thinking over a plan similar to yours for the last 20 years." "Oh, yes," said Dr. Guthrie, "I dare say; but you have never carried it out." So some people are always thinking over some very fine plan of their own—but while the grass grows the steed starves. Now the God who plans also works; let us believe this. Christian, God has planned to divide the Red Sea, and He says, "Go forward!" And are you going to sit still till the sea is divided for you? No, in God's name, Man, go forward, and the sea will be divided when you need it to be divided, but not before. What use would there be in having the Red Sea out of its normal condition, and its bed laid dry for hours before the hosts are to walk through it? You shall have God's help when you need it, and you are not to expect that God will minister to the cravings of your unbelief. No; trust in Him, and you shall see wonders; but if you will not trust in Him, neither shall you see Him. "He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief."

And, Brothers and Sisters, when you are resolved to carry out God's Plan, *I hope you will joyfully expect singular assistance.* I may not often quote my own life as an example except to you who are my friends and fellow workers, and to whom my life is but your own brought out in public. You know how we, as a Church, have been led to mysteriously see the hand of God. I remember one night, when we resolved to build this House of Prayer, we knew that we were poor, much too poor to ever be able to raise so large a sum as this house would cost, especially when the vow was registered that it should never be built with borrowed money, but should either be paid for or else not built at all. I remember preaching that evening from the text, "And the iron did swim," and saying that the building of this house seemed as likely a thing to happen as if the iron should swim; but I said I was glad it was 25,000 pounds which we needed, for if it had been only 5,000 pounds, or 10,000 pounds, we might feel able to raise it, but 25,000 thousand pounds was impossible, only I believed that God could do impossibilities! It was one of the most singular things that ever occurred, when a friend at a distance whom I never saw but once in my life, and who had no connection with us, put down 5,000 pounds himself toward it! We were encouraged; we went to work, and the thing was done, and as it went on, more and more singular helps were sent.

When the College of which I am president had been commenced, for a year or so, all my means were spent; my purse was dried up, and I had no other means of carrying it on. In this very House of Prayer, one Sunday evening, after I had spent all I had for the support of my young men for the ministry—there is a dear friend, now sitting behind me who knows the truth of what I am saying. I said to him, "There is nothing left

whatever." He said, "You have a good Banker, Sir." "Yes," I said, "and I should like to draw upon Him now, for I have nothing." "Well," he said, "how do you know? Have you prayed about it?" "Yes, I have." "Well, then, leave it with Him; have you opened your letters?" "No, I do not open my letters on Sundays." "Well," he said, "open them for once." I did so, and in the first one I opened there was a banker's letter to this effect—"Dear Sir, We beg to inform you that a lady, totally unknown to us, has left with us 200 pounds for you to use in the education of young men." Such a sum has never come since, and it never came before; and I have no more idea than the dead in their graves how it came then, nor who it came from, but to me it seemed that it came directly from God. We have gone on successfully ever since with that work, and are resolved to launch out into others; and I believe that we only need as a Church, and your pastor only needs as your pastor, to have faith in God, and we shall find Him "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Wherever there is the hand of a true man there is the wing of an angel! Wherever there is the working of the sword of Joshua and the prayer of Moses, the almighty arm of the God of Israel is present. You have but to believe, and to go forward, leaning upon Him who made Heaven and earth, and all will be well.

Let us pluck up courage, and from this very morning let us feel that we are not to be guided by the dogmas of carnal prudence but by the dictates of FAITH IN THE INVISIBLE GOD. Let us no longer measure means, and calculate possibilities, but let us go to Him who cannot be measured or limited. Let us trust Him where we cannot trace Him. Let us serve Him with might and main, and, to use the words of Gerhardt—

"Let us in life and death
His steadfast Truths declare,
And publish with our latest breath,
His love and guardian care!"

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 28:9-29.

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WAR WITH AMALEK
NO. 712

DELIVERED SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim."
Exodus 17:8.

THERE were two great trials which the children of Israel had to endure in passing onward to the promised rest—their needs and their enemies; but I must add a third, which sprang out of these two by reason of the unbelief of their hearts; that third evil, far worse than the other two, was their sins. Probably, my Brothers and Sisters, you have found out by now that you could contentedly endure your needs, and could courageously contend with your foes if you were not weakened and hampered by your sins. A man's worst foes are those of his own household. As for Israel's needs, I think Israel may be congratulated in having known them; for, suppose they could have brought with them enough provision from Goshen, or could have been supplied by trading purveyors, they would never have been honored to feed upon the manna which dropped from Heaven; and suppose a canal had been dug for them to flow at the edge of the whole road of their march, or that they could have found a succession of wells hard by the spots where they pitched their tents, then they never would have drank of that marvelous Rock whose flints gushed with water, of which the Apostle tells us that it was Christ, or an eminent type of Christ. They were gentlemen-commoners upon the bounty of Heaven; courtiers fed from the table of the King of kings; they were lifted up to eat angels' food; they were satisfied with royal dainties. In this light, they are to be congratulated for their needs, for, if they had not known hunger, nor thirst, neither had they eaten manna, nor had they drank the water from the Rock.

And you, Beloved, are much in the same case. The day will come when in clearer light than this, you will thank God for your needs, and be of the same mind as the Apostle, who said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." And again, "For when I am weak, then am I strong." You will thank God that your needs were the platform for His Providence to display its care upon, that the very wilderness was a gift to you because He prepared a table for you in the midst of it, and might have left you to prepare one for yourself if it had not been a desert place. As for the enemies which beset the children of Israel, I was about to say they might almost be congratulated on account of them too, for, fierce as they were, yet they could never have had victories if they had not known battles. The enemies of Israel were but so many sheaves for Israel's victorious sword to reap—as the wild beasts of the wood yield food to the hunter, so were the haters of Israel as a prey unto their valiant men. Over every

enemy of His people the right hand of the Lord was gloriously exalted. You too, Brothers and Sisters, you will have reason to thank God for all your enemies. If your life were one of perpetual peace, it is clear there could be no triumphs. If there were not campaigns of warfare, there would be no shouts of them that triumph, no trophies to hang up in the halls of memory. Oh, if we can be kept from sins, if we can be preserved from their power, we may be thankful for needs and even thankful for foes when we look at them in the light of the fiery pillar of God's promised Presence. But our sins! Our sins! Our sins! What shall we do with them? If it were not for the victorious blood by which we conquer, we might lie down in despair; for who among us is, alone and unaided, a match for his sins?

This morning we thought of considering the war with Amalek as a typical representation of the experience of God's people, and our prayer is that we may speak so that those who are greatly troubled and afflicted may derive some comfort from the Truth of God advanced, and that lagging saints may be stimulated to fight the battles of their Master, lest the curse go out against them, "because they came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." We shall use the text three ways, first, *as a picture of the experience of each individual Christian;* secondly, *as a representation of the history of each separate Church;* and thirdly, *as a very excellent description of the history of the entire Church of the living God, from its first day even till its close.*

I. First, then, we have here THE EXPERIENCE OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN.

Observe the children of Israel were *emancipated from bondage,* and had left Egypt behind, even as you and I have been rescued from our natural estate and are no longer the servants of sin. They had been redeemed by blood sprinkled upon the door posts and upon the lintel, and we too have had Redemption applied to our souls, and have seen that God has looked upon the blood and has passed over us. They had feasted upon the paschal lamb as we have done, for Jesus has become to us our meat and our drink, and our soul is satisfied with Him. They had been pursued by their enemies, even as we were pursued by our old sins, but they had seen these furious foes all drowned in the Red Sea, which they had passed through dry-shod; and we, too, have seen our past sins forever buried in the Red Sea of atoning blood. Our iniquities, which threatened to drive us back into the Egypt of despair, are gone forever; they sank like lead in the mighty waters, the depths have covered them—there is not one of them left. Israel sung a new song upon the other side of the sea; and we too have rejoiced in God, and like Miriam we have sounded the loud timbrel of exultation and have danced with holy joy, while our lips have chanted the hymn of victory—

"Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously."

Many of us are now free from the yoke of sin and Satan, and as the Lord's freemen we glorify His name. Oh that all of us were in such a happy state!

The children of Israel were probably *anticipating ease,* forgetting that the promised land was yet many days' journey beyond them. Inexperience and childishness made them expect a continuance of uninterrupted song and feasting, and there was a time when we indulged the same foolish hopes. We said to ourselves, "Let us be at peace, for the warfare is over; now may we take our ease. Pharaoh is drowned, the horses and the chariots have sunk like lead in the mighty waters; no whips of the taskmaster now, no bricks to make without straw, no more shall we be trod down by a cruel people and worn out with the labors of the brick kiln; with a high hand and a mighty arm have we been brought forth; let us rejoice and be merry, let us be glad all our days, and dance the desert through." That was the voice of our inexperience and folly; how soon were our budding hopes nipped by an unexpected frost! For, like Israel, *we soon experienced tribulations.* Suddenly there came upon us the thirst and the hunger which only Heaven's love could supply; and when we least dreamed of it, the fierce Amalek of temptation came down like a wolf on the fold. Young Christian, do not dream that as soon as you are converted your struggle is over, but conclude that your conflict has but just begun. Some persons look upon spiritual Regeneration as being the change of the old nature into a new; experience teaches us that this is a very false description of the new birth. Conversion and Regeneration do not change the old nature; that remains the same; but we have at our new birth infused into us a new nature, a new principle, and this new principle at once begins a contest with the old principle; therefore the Apostle tells us of the old man and of the new man; he speaks of the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit striving against the flesh.

I do not care what the Doctrinal statement of any man may be upon the subject; I am sure that the experience of the most of us will prove to a demonstration that there are two natures within us, that only a complex description can describe us at all; we find a company of two armies within us, and the fight goes on, and, if anything, waxes hotter every day. We do trust that the right principle grows stronger, and we hope that through Divine Grace the evil principle is weakened and mortified; but, at present, it is with most of us a very sharp contest, and were it not for Divine Strength, we might throw down our weapons in hopelessness. Young Christian, you have begun a life of warfare, rest assured of that. You would never be told to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ if it were not so. You must not put that sword up into its scabbard, but rather sharpen it and hold it always ready in your hand. Watch constantly, and pray without ceasing; for, till you get your foot upon the golden pavement of the New Jerusalem, you must wear a warrior's harness and bear a warrior's toils. Indeed, dear Friends, there was that in the camp of the children of Israel which ought to have taught them to expect trouble, for was there not a voice heard among the murmuring host, "Is the Lord among us or not?" That croaking voice of unbelief foreboded ill. How could they expect to know peace when they doubted the God of Peace? "There is no peace, says my God, to the

wicked." And in proportion as the righteous are at all like the wicked, in that proportion they lose peace. The cry of unbelief in your heart and mine, when it says, "Is the Lord among us or not?" ought to warn us that we are not yet in the land of rest, but shall have to fight with many an enemy before the banner may be furled. Besides, Israel ought to have remembered that there was an ancient feud between the children of Esau and the children of Jacob, for had not Esau been supplanted by his brother?

Amalek, Duke Amalek as he was called, was a descendant of Esau, and treasured up all his father's hatred and enmity towards the house of Israel. Did Israel expect to journey near to Edom and not be attacked? And do you expect, Christian, that sin shall be round about you and not assault you?—

"Is this vain world a friend to Divine Grace,
To help you on to God?"

If you look for friendship from a sinful world you are grievously mistaken. There is a deadly hereditary feud between the Christian and the powers of darkness. It sprang up in the Garden, in the day when God said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed," and it continues still the same. You must fight if you would win the crown, and your pathway to the other side of Jordan must be the pathway of an armed crusader, who has to contend for every inch of the way if he is to win it.

In proceeding with the narrative we notice that they *found opposition from an unexpected quarter*. Ignorance may have made them reckon upon the friendliness of Amalek, for they evidently journeyed at their ease without proper precaution, presuming upon the relationship and peaceableness of the dwellers in the land. It is just where we feel most safe that we should be most cautious. "A man's foes are they of his own household." I do not think the Christian has so much to fear from open and avowed enemies as from those deceitful foes who claim to be his friends. Sin is never so much a Jezebel as when it paints its face with daubs of respectability and patches of innocence. Things dubious are more dangerous than things distinctly evil. The border land between right and wrong is thronged with thieves and robbers; beware of cutthroats, you who journey there. Even right things may easily become wrong when they carry away our hearts, and therefore we must guard against their attractions. Many people need not be much afraid of being led into drunkenness and blasphemy, for we are not likely to give way to these grosser evils; but we have far more reason to watch against worldliness and pride, for these are enemies which select the godly as their special object of attack. Take heed to your virtues, Christian, for these, when exaggerated, become your vices; take care of the good things in which you boast, for they may furnish heat for the hatching of the vipers' eggs of pride and self-satisfaction.

Israel was assailed in a quarter which was unguarded because unlikely to be attacked. In the Word of God we find that Amalek fell upon the rear of the host. The hindmost must have seemed to themselves to be

the most secure, for Pharaoh's host had been destroyed, and what further was there to fear? The weak and feeble came slowly on, at perfect ease, never so much as suspecting the existence of a foe. The van, I have no doubt, was kept well protected, for they knew not what hands might interrupt their onward march, but the rear they thought might be left exposed, and there it was the foe attacked them. Christian, wherever you diminish your caution, there will the foe be upon you. When you say to yourself, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved," concerning such-and-such a thing, it is there that you are most likely to fall. We are strongest usually when we fancy ourselves weakest because we take the matter to God, and weakest where we dream that we are strongest because we refrain from prayer. It will be observed, I think, in most Christians' experience, that God has left them to see their weakness where they themselves reckoned that no weakness could have been perceptible. Let us then set a watch all around, and ask the Lord to be a wall of fire around us, and a glory in the midst.

This attack of Amalek was rendered the more dangerous because it was all of a sudden. It seems that Amalek caught them in ambush, and fell upon them without notice. There was no regular proclamation of war, no pitching of the battle, no sending out of skirmishers and scouts, but the enemy fell upon them all of a sudden like a gang of bandits. Just so will sin do with you and me. If the devil would send me a notice when he means to tempt me, I might readily contend with him and defeat him, but this he will never do. He will not tell you whether or not tomorrow he will tempt you in your business; this is not his way of hunting for his game—"Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." He will, if possible, take you unawares, and before you can put on your armor his arrows will sorely wound you. We are not ignorant of his devices. Well did the Master say, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch!" And oh, with what vigilance, what holy diligence must you and I watch against the winding and twisting of the old serpent, who will, if possible, bite our heels or drive his venom into our hearts.

I think I must not omit to say that this attack of Amalek, though designed for the greatest mischief, did not occur without Divine arrangement and overruling. We may be thankful that though Satan selected the most suitable season for himself, yet the Lord made his devices of no effect. Amalek fell upon them when they were faint and weary, but the manna and the flowing Rock soon changed the face of affairs, and the novelty of this gracious supply inspired the host with unusual courage. Fresh from the feast, they had good stomach for the fray, and found congenial occupation for their renewed vigor in hewing down their assailants. Satan may beset us at our weakest point, but God has a way of making us all of a sudden strong, so that in the end the attack comes at a time when we are most fitted to repel it. Have you not observed this? If your present trial had come at another time you could not have borne it; if your present temptation had presented itself but a day before, you would have fallen a victim to it; but it came just after you had enjoyed such communion with Christ that sin had no influence over

you, the charms of Jesus made you blind to all other beauties. You had had your mouth so filled with manna that you were made strong in the Strength of God to put to rout the host of your foes. Brothers and Sisters, be always cautious, but be confident in God. Watch against the foe, but be thankful that there is another Watcher who foresees all the devices of the devil, and who will not deliver you into his hands nor allow you to perish.

When the assault was made, *the people were commanded to exert themselves*. The message was given, "Go, choose out men, and fight with Amalek." Israel never fought with Egypt. God fought for them, and they held their peace. When we are in our natural state under the bondage of sin, it is of very little use for us to fight against it; the only way of escape from the reigning power of sin is through the precious blood and the working of Divine Grace. But this was a different case. The children of Israel were not under the power of Amalek—they were free men; and so are we no longer under the power of sin. The yoke of sin has been broken by God's Grace from off our necks, and now we have to fight not as slaves against a master, but as free men against a foe. Moses never said to the children of Israel while they were in Egypt, "Go, fight with Pharaoh." Not at all; it is God's work to bring us out of Egypt and make us His people, but when we are delivered from bondage, although it is God's work to help us, we must be active in our cause. Now that we are alive from the dead we must wrestle with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness if we are to overcome. "Go fight," is the command.

Do not many Christians act as if the sin would be driven out of them through their sleeping soundly? Let them be sure that a slumbering spirit is the best friend that sin can find. If your lusts are to be destroyed, they must be cut up root and branch by sheer force of personal exertion through Divine Grace, they are not to be blown away by weak wishes and sleepy desires. God will not relieve us of our sins as sometimes persons have diseased limbs removed while under the influence of chloroform—we shall see our sins die while our minds are thoroughly active against them, and resolutely bent upon their destruction. "Go, *fight* with Amalek." Greatly to be deplored is the way in which some Christians say, "Ah, well, it is my besetting sin," or, "It is my natural temperament," or, "It is my constitution." Shame on you, Christian. What if it is so? Do you mean to say to your Father's face that you have so great a love for the sin which He hates, that you will harbor it and invent hiding places for it? Why, when a sin does so easily beset you, you must muster your whole force and cry to Heaven for strength that the dangerous foe may be overcome, for one sin harbored in the soul will ruin you; one sin really loved and indulged will become damning evidence against you, and prove that you really do not love the Savior, for if you did you would hate every false way. We must fight if we would overcome our sins!

Spiritual fighting must be conducted on most earnest and prudent principles. They were to *choose* men. So we must choose our ways of contending with sin. The best part of a man should be engaged in

warfare with his sins. Certain sins can only be fought by the understanding; we ought then to sit down and deliberately look at the evil, and learn its wickedness, by deliberately judging and considering its motives and its consequences. Perhaps when we clearly see what the sin is, Mr. Understanding, as Bunyan calls it, may be able to knock the brains out of it. One peculiar order of sins is only to be overcome by a speedy flight like that of the chaste Joseph. Sins of the flesh are never to be reasoned or parleyed with; there is no more reasoning with them than with the winds; understanding is nonplussed, for lust, like a hurricane of sand, blinds the eyes. We must flee. It is true valor in such a case to turn the back. "Resist the devil," says Paul, but he does not say resist lust; he puts it thus—"Flee youthful lusts." When warring with the legions of unrighteousness we shall need all the best powers of our renewed nature, for the conflict will be stern. Oh, Believer, you will need to bring your veterans, your pick and choice thoughts into the fight with Amalek; the faith which has endured the storm must face the foe, the love which endures all things must march to the war. It is no child's-play to fight with sin. It needed all a Savior's strength to tread it in the winepress when He was here on earth, and it will need all your might and more to overcome it—you will only overcome it indeed through the blood of the Lamb.

This makes me notice that though the men of Israel were to fight, and the chosen men were to be selected, yet they *were to fight under the command of Joshua,* that is, Jesus, the Savior. There is no fighting sin except under the Leadership of Christ. We must fight sin with His weapons, we must see its sinfulness by the light of His sufferings, see its mischief in the sorrows of His death, see its destruction in the triumphs of His Resurrection. We must flee to the strong for strength, and seek help where God has laid it, namely, on Him who is mighty. When Jesus leads we need not be afraid. Promptly to follow Jesus is to secure a victory. His very name puts His enemies to rout; who can withstand the terrors of His arm?

The narrative points out to us that effort, alone, is not enough. Three men are seen wending their way up the steep sides of the hill, solemnly walking along, as if they had most weighty business on hand. They are seeking a point of advantage, from which to gall the foe with the artillery of prayer. So mighty was the prayer of Moses that all depended upon it. The petitions of Moses defeated the enemy more than the fighting of Joshua. The edge of Moses' prayer was more powerful than the edge of Joshua's sword. It matters not how loudly Joshua shouts to his men unless Moses fervently cries to his God. The young soldier would as soon have left the field if the old commander had left the closet. Force and fervor, decision and devotion, valor and vehemence must join their forces, and all will be well. You must wrestle with your sin, but the major part of the wrestling must be done alone in private with God.

Prayer, like Moses, holds up the token of the Covenant before the Lord. The rod was the emblem of God's working with Moses, the symbol of God's government in Israel. Learn, O pleading Saint, to hold up the

promise and the oath of God before Him. He cannot deny His own declarations. Hold up the rod of promise, and have what you will.

Moses grew weary, and then his friends assisted him. When at any time your prayer flags, let faith support one hand, and let holy hope uplift the other, and prayer, seating itself upon the Stone of Israel, the Rock of our salvation, will continue and prevail. Beware of faintness in devotion; if Moses felt it who can escape? It is far easier to fight with sin in public than to pray against it in private. It is remarked that Joshua never grew weary in the fighting, but Moses did grow weary in the praying; the more spiritual an exercise, the more difficult it is for flesh and blood to maintain it. Let us cry then for special strength, and may the Spirit of God who helps our infirmities, as He allowed help to Moses, enable us like he to continue with our hands steady till the going down of the sun. It is not praying today nor yet tomorrow that will win life's battle, it is praying till the going down of the sun. It is not pleading for a month, and then ceasing supplication, Christian, it is, "till the going down of the sun," till the evening of life is over; until you shall come to the rising of a better sun, or to the land where they need no sun, you *must* continue to pray—

"Long as they live should Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live."

Let us learn then that there is to be action, but there must be supplication. We cannot expect to conquer Amalek without a combination of the two.

I will not detain you much longer over this point, only remark that where holy activity is joined with earnest supplication, *the result as to our sins is absolutely sure*—the enemy will be defeated; we shall put our feet upon the necks of all our sins. There is no fear of their overcoming us if we do but lay hold on Divine Strength.

And, if ever we overcome sin once, it should be the *signal for proclaiming a general war against all sin.* The fight and victory over Amalek brought from God's mouth the solemn declaration that there should be war with Amalek forever and ever. So must it be with you. Have you mastered one sin? Slay the next, and the next, and the next. Can you curb your temper now? Now smite your pride. Is your pride humbled? Now drive an arrow through the very liver of your sloth. And is your sloth overcome? Now seek, by Divine Grace, to strike through the neck of the next temptation. Onward to the total destruction of every Amalekite must the child of Israel go.

But notice, that in the whole business the Glory was given to God. No pillar was erected on that field of Israel's warfare in commemoration of Joshua, but an altar as a memorial to Jehovah. That day Israel did not lift on high the banner of Joshua, and sing of him as of the victorious Maccabaeus—

"See, the conquering hero comes!
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums!"

but that day it was said, "Jehovah Nissi," the Lord is our banner, for they ascribed the Glory and honor unto Him whose right hand alone had gotten to Him the victory. So must we do in all our successes, for if we

overcome a sin and then boast of ourselves, we are overcome by sin. If looking back upon the past we say with congratulation, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are; I thank You for this and that," but all the while are thinking that we have much more reason to thank ourselves, we show that we are still dragged in captivity with the fetters upon our wrists. I leave the point, hoping that some young Christian may have received a lesson in experience. And yet I fear that we must all learn experience for ourselves, and that what is told us by others is but an idle tale. I pray that you who are beginning a new generation may not be as your father's were, a stiff-necked people, but that you may walk before the Lord with greater holiness and smite Amalek with sterner determination than your fathers have done, that so the victory may be unto God through you.

II. In the second place, the whole narrative may be interpreted AS THE HISTORY OF ANY ONE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. I draw a distinction between the general Church and any one particular Church. In the olden times the Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, though acknowledging one another and recognizing their unity, were distinct organizations managing their own affairs. And here I will digress so far as to say, that the only Christian unity which you and I may ever expect to see and to seek after is not the amalgamation of all Churches into one colossal scheme of government, but the spiritual union of all the Churches in working for the Lord, each Church exercising its discipline within its own bounds, and carrying out Christ's commands within its own walls, and at the same time recognizing all other truly Christian Churches as being parts of the one Body of Christ. Instead of attempting to destroy all these separate Churches in order to create unity, we should build up the walls of each house so that the whole city may be compact together. Even the names which describe the varieties of our conscientious convictions are useful, and are only sneered at by a party who under the cloak of being unsectarian are more sectarian than the worst of us could even slanderously be said to be. Suppose that all the livery companies in London should give up their distinctive names, so that there should be no Goldsmiths' Company, nor Cloth Workers, nor Merchant Tailors, nor Fishmongers, but that all should be called citizens, it would be a wonderful piece of policy and would singularly unite the citizens of London, would it not?

We believe that the reverse would be the case. The existence of the separate corporations, each with its peculiar interests to maintain, but all bound up with the prosperity of the city, help to create unity; and so the unity of the Savior's body is preserved rather than destroyed by each Believer carrying out his convictions of the Lord's will, and not refusing to identify himself with those who think with him, nor refusing to wear the name which describes them. Certain sects cry out, "We are called Christians." "Yes, I say, and are we not too?" Are they Brethren? So are we. Are they Christians? So are we. Do they seek to be followers of Christ? So do we. There is the less need for some to parade the name of

Christians when they know that they are Christians. Let us try to live out our Christianity rather than blazon it upon our doorposts.

I am not making an unscriptural distinction when I say, first of all, I am going to regard the narrative as a picture of *a* Church, and then afterwards as a picture of the whole Church. In any one Church there will be, there must be, if it is a church of God, earnest contention *for* the Truth of God and *against* error. We, as a Church have, I trust been brought up out of Egypt, and are bound together by a common deliverance. We have to fight with Amalek. For the defense of those Doctrines which we have learned, and which we believe to be the Truth as it is in Jesus, we are called to fight. We are not merely to hold them as the unfaithful servant wrapped his talent in a napkin, but we are to publish what we believe to be true, and, if any disagree, we are to hold our own, or rather, hold the Master's Truth with a firm hand, and not be afraid to contend for it at all hazards. Our chief war must always be with sin—with sin in ourselves, with sin in others, with sin everywhere. This is the great point in the Christian's contention, and from this war the Believer must never cease. Attack sin in every place, and for this reason, if for no other, sin and error will always attack us.

In this particular Church I know there are many errors that are always falling upon us, and smiting some of the hindmost, the weakest and the feeblest. One opens one's eyes with astonishment, sometimes, to see what strange errors people are falling into who should know better; but when you come to remember how hindmost they were, and how much the weakest they were, it is not quite so great a marvel that they should be struck by the foe. The fact is that in such an age as this, if we do not attack error, error will eat us up; and it comes to this—we must either fight sin, or sin as a fretting moth and a devouring canker will utterly devour us. If there is not an earnest contention for the Truth of God amidst all the Church members, there will soon be errors on this side, and errors on the other side. Each Church should teach its own distinctive principles with a vigorous, earnest, Scriptural dogmatism. If we do indeed hold the very Truth as it is in Jesus, we must fight for it valiantly, for if we do not fight Amalek, Amalek will certainly fight us, and the hindmost will always be suffering and the weakest go to the wall. It is on behalf of the weaker Brothers and Sisters, who are easily perverted, that we must watch and fight perpetually.

To all Christian effort in every Church must be added unceasing intercession. The Christian pastor is, in some respects, comparable to Moses, for he is set apart as a leader in the band of Brethren; and as such, his business is not only to teach the people but to plead for them with God. I wish that some of our pastors were sustained as they should be by their Aarons and their Hurs. Alas, I know many a fainting Brother whose hands are hanging down, who finds an Aaron to pull them still lower, and a Hur to depress his spirits yet more. I would take up a mourning, a lamentation, for my Brothers who toil in honorable but obscure spheres where cold neglect and chill indifference are their portion. Alas for others, in the midst of Churches torn apart with schism

and polluted with heresy, whose life is one perpetual burden unto them. I would God it were far otherwise with them! I have to thank God, and under God to thank you, that so many of you act the part of Aaron and of Hur, and are willing to hold up the pastor's hands, and the hands of all my other fellow laborers, the workers for Christ Jesus. But some of you do not do it. Some of you neglect prayer in the closet for the Church's work. I hope you are not neglecting prayer on your own account, but you do not pray as you should for the Lord to advance the interests of Truth in the world; you neglect Prayer Meetings, and absent yourselves from the week-day means of Divine Grace! Brothers and Sisters, these things ought not to be. If you cannot be Moses you may be Aaron. If you cannot fight and assist Joshua, you may climb the hill and succor Moses. If you can neither teach in the classes or in the Sunday school, nor preach in the streets and so fight, you can at least be much in the closet and much in prayer!

Oh the untold benefits that come to a Christian Church from the quiet prayerful members—least known on earth but best known in Heaven! Let us have both at work. May the Lord Jesus help us to advance from strength to strength in earnest effort of every kind, and may He at the same time be our Strength upon the mountain while we draw near to God's Throne in prayer.

III. But lastly, THE HISTORY OF THE WHOLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS HERE BEFORE US AS IN A PICTURE.

The sacramental host of God's Elect is still warring on earth, Jesus Christ being the Captain of their salvation. He has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Though this is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, yet is it not incorrect to say that the Lord Jesus Christ is still at the head of His people? Listen to the shouts of war! Onward come the bands of priest-craft, hooded monks, and shaven priests, with an allied host of England's silly clergy arrayed in gaudy vestments and tricked out with childish ornaments. A fierce effort is making to restore the Romish Antichrist to his ancient seat. Now let the people of God stand fast in their ranks, and let no man's heart fail him. It is true that just now in England the battle is turned against us, and unless the Lord Jesus and the Eternal Joshua shall lift His sword, I know not what may become of the Church of God in this land; but let us be of good courage, and play the man! There never was a day when Protestantism seemed to tremble more in the scales than now. The way to Rome and so the way to Hell, is paved (I suppose with good intentions) by those Anglican clergy whose vocation it seems to be to show the long-suffering patience of a Protestant country.

Here we have a national Church which has become the jackal for the lion of Rome, and we greatly need a bold voice and a strong hand to preach and publish the Old Gospel for which martyrs bled and confessors died. The Savior is, by His Spirit, still on earth; let this cheer us! He is always in the midst of the fight, and therefore the battle is not doubtful. Meanwhile, what a sweet satisfaction it is to see our Lord Jesus, like a greater Moses upon the hill yonder, prevalently pleading for

His people! He is better than Moses, for His hands never grow feeble; and if the prophetic hand of Jesus should grow weak, there is His priestly office, like Aaron, to bear up one hand, and His princely office, like Hur, a Prince, to bear up the other; and so the three together, Prophet, Priest, and King. He bears aloft the wonder-working rod—Israel wins the day, and Amalek is struck. O anxious Gazer! Look not at the battle so much below, for there you shall be enshrouded in smoke and amazed with garments rolled in blood; but lift your eyes up yonder where your Savior lives and pleads, for while He intercedes the cause of God is safe. Let us fight as if it all depended upon us, but let us look up and know that all depends upon Him. Now by the lilies of Christian purity and by the roses of the Savior's Atonement, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, we charge you who are lovers of Jesus to do valiantly in the Holy War; for Truth and Righteousness, for the Kingdom and crown jewels of your Master, against the harlot of Rome and the many-headed beast on which she rides, charge with dauntless courage. Those who gave your fathers to the flames and cast your grandfathers to rot in prisons, let them know that the spirit of your grandfathers still lives in you; let them see that there is a seed still upon earth in whose breast the Truth of God still finds a tabernacle—men who can suffer for the Truth of God, and can boldly declare it in the midst of foes. Never become cowardly and mean; never despair. How can you? Christ at your head like Joshua, and Christ in Heaven like Moses; Christ here with the holy Gospel in His hand like a two-edged sword, and Christ there with His atoning merits like a wonder-working rod. Be strong and very courageous, and by His help, Who does valiantly, you shall yet send up the shout Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns. The Lord bless you all for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
EXODUS 16:1-15.

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SOUL MURDER—WHO IS GUILTY?
NO. 713

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 30, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your Righteousness."
Psalm 51:14.

DAVID had been grossly guilty towards his faithful and veteran friend Uriah. He had given instructions that Uriah should be led into the hottest part of the fight, and then suddenly deserted so that he might be struck by the sword of the Syrians, and might appear to have died in the natural order of battle. Whereas, of course, his death was a cowardly murder, planned and devised by the very man who ought to have been his protector. It is pleasing to observe in David's penitence that he plainly names his sin. He does not call it manslaughter; he does not speak of it as an imprudence by which an unfortunate accident occurred to a worthy man, but he calls it by its true name, bloodshed. It is true he did not actually slay the husband of Bathsheba; it was by another hand that Uriah died, but still it was planned in David's heart that Uriah should be slain, and he was before the Lord the murderer of Uriah. He calls a spade a spade, and names his crime as bloodshed. Let us learn in our confessions to be honest with God. Do not give fair names to foul sins; call them what you will, they will smell no sweeter. What God sees them to be, that you must labor to feel them to be, and with all openness of heart acknowledge their true character.

Observe, too, that David not only gives it the right name, but is evidently oppressed with a sense of the heinousness of his sin. It is easy to use words, but it is difficult to feel their meaning. He prays like one who is consciously guilty. The blood of Uriah was now not on his hands alone but on his conscience; the bloody hand was before him continually, and the impossibility to purge away the stain, except by the sacrificial hyssop, made David's heart lay low in the dust. The 51st Psalm is the photograph of a contrite spirit. Oh, let us seek after the same brokenness of heart, for however excellent our words may be, yet if the heart is not conscious of the blackness and Hell-deservingness of sin, we cannot expect to find mercy with the Judge of all the earth.

Possibly, my Brothers and Sisters, you will think that I ought not to use such a text as this in addressing you, for there are no murderers here. "A sermon from this text to someone who had strangled another or fired the deadly shot through his enemy's heart might be well enough, but are there any here," asks one, "who are guilty of bloodshed?" Yes, Friend, the preacher is guilty at any rate if no one else is, and he believes that there is not a person here who will be able to go out of this house

unconvicted of sin in this respect, if God the Holy Spirit is but here, first to enable the preacher to lay the charge clearly, and secondly, to enable your conscience honestly to take that home which really belongs to you.

There are other ways of being guilty of bloodshed besides stabbing with a knife, or poisoning with a deadly drug; there is another kind of murder far less detested, but equally black in God's sight; not the destruction of the body, but the destruction of the soul; not the destruction of the mere shell, the outward man, but the murder of the real man, the inward self, the inner spirit, the soul murder which cries for vengeance before high Heaven, concerning which we have need to offer the prayer of David, "Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation."

Before I proceed to the heavy work of this morning, which is to bring home sin to our consciences, I would like to put in a word by way of caution. I shall have to speak of some who "destroy with their meat those for whom Christ died," and of others who, "crucify the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame." And when I do so, there will be some who will not dare to take exception to the Scriptural phraseology, because everyone yields to that, but they will fight hard against the supposed meaning of the very expressions which they are forced to put up with. They will say to me, "It is impossible that any should be destroyed for whom Christ died," and I may add it is equally impossible that Christ should be crucified afresh. I shall quite agree with them in this, but if they therefore gather that it is impossible for anyone to be guilty of the two sins mentioned, I shall not agree with them, because such offenses would not have been mentioned in Scripture as having been committed if they could not be committed. Do you not know, dear Friends, that a man may be guilty of a sin which he never could actually commit, but which he committed in his heart? For instance, in very deed and act, I can never destroy a man for whom Christ died; it is not in my power nor in the power of even devils to destroy such souls; but if I commit an action which in the ordinary nature of things would destroy such a soul, if I utter teachings, or if I present an example which, if God did not prevent, would destroy such a soul, then I am guilty, because I would have destroyed that soul if it had not been for God's interposing. His interposition does not take away my guilt though it prevented its effects.

Though I cannot crucify the Lord afresh, that is to say, He is so exalted in Heaven that all Hell could not drag Him down to the Cross, yet if I do an action which would crucify Him again, if it could be done, an action which has a tendency to put Him to an open shame, though I may not be able to complete the thing in act, yet, since its natural influence would lead to such a result, I am guilty of it. This is easily illustrated—suppose that a man who had the management of certain points on a railway should willfully turn the points in such a way that two trains must come into collision, and the passengers would be killed. Imagine that an angel should descend from Heaven and stand between those two trains and prevent the collision, where would be the difference between

the man's guilt whether the people were killed or not killed? The guilt is the same, because the thing would have happened if it were not for a miraculous interposition. So by bad teaching, and by unholy living, those for whom Christ died would be made to perish, if it were not for a Divine Interposition; and by inconsistency of conduct Christ could be nailed again to the tree, if it were not prevented by Divine Power; but that prevention does not at all alter my sin. I am just as guilty as if the natural effect had followed. If you should fire at a man, and the bullet were unexpectedly turned aside, you would be as truly guilty as if your victim had died; human law might not call you a murderer, because human law is obliged very much to judge a sin by the effect, but the Lord looks at the heart and weighs the motive, the desire and the design.

Please understand then, that when I shall be speaking this morning about your destroying souls, I do not mean that you will in the end defeat the Divine Purpose of Divine Grace, but you will be as guilty as if you could. Jesus Christ will not lose a soul whom He has determined to save, or be thwarted in any of His designs of mercy, but this will not extenuate your guilt or mine. I put this in by way of caution, lest any should think me dubious of the great Doctrines of Sovereign Grace, which are every day dearer than ever to me.

I. The first business this morning is to awaken and bring home to the conscience of this assembled multitude A STARTLING CRIME.

There are many ways of being guilty of bloodshed. Every person is guilty of it in one respect, namely, concerning *the death of our Lord.* I will not say that we are all guilty of His actual murder upon the Cross, for we were not then born, yet as it was the common sin of mankind which rendered it necessary that He should suffer, we cannot escape from a share in His death. This I can see very clearly, that those who reject, despise or neglect the claims of the Lord Jesus, and refuse to bow before Him, do in effect mock Him, scourge Him, and put Him to death. In speaking against His Gospel, in deriding His servants, in neglecting His Book, in denying His Deity, and in refusing to believe in Him, men are virtually guilty of crucifying the Lord of Glory; for they thus do that which proves that if they had been in a like condition with the Roman soldiers and with the Jewish priests, they would have nailed Him to the Cross. We have committed actions tantamount to the crucifying of the Savior, and therein His blood comes upon us to our condemnation, unless by faith it comes upon us to our acceptance and forgiveness. Oh, Sinner, let this be forever a subject of trembling to you that you have necessarily something to do with the Cross, that having heard of it, it shall be unto you either a savor of death unto death, or of life unto life; either the blood of Jesus shall fall upon your heart to cleanse you from all guilt, or it shall fall upon your head to condemn you. You have said, "I know Him not, I will not obey Him, I will not yield to Him, I will as far as lies in me put out His light and quench His dominion in the midst of mankind." What is this but aiming at the very life of Christ, and being guilty of His blood?

Another form of bloodshed, and I am only hinting at these two, is that of anger without a cause. We are told on Inspired Authority that he who is angry with his brother is a murderer. Unless there is good and sufficient cause for anger, in which case a man may be angry and sin not, anger is murder. When I have a hasty thought against a man and wish him out of the world, I have killed him in thought, and even though I may disguise the wish under the expression of wishing him in Heaven, there is guilt in the desire. Oh the hard, cruel, black thoughts which men have towards one another, when they are angry; why, they kill and slay a thousand times over. These hasty sins are soon forgotten by us, but they are not soon forgotten by God. Let us weep over our hot tempers, for the fire of Hell burns in them; and let us be forever free from that lingering malice which harbors resentment, and will not be brought to forgive, for this especially is before God a form of bloodshed, and concerning it we have need to pray, "Deliver me, O God, from malice, and evil temper, and envy, and all uncharitableness, lest the guilt of bloodshed should be at my door."

Having hinted at these, I now come to what I am driving at, namely, those sins against men's souls by means of which blood may be at our door.

Let me call to your remembrance, some of you, your early days, and your *first youthful transgressions.* It is taken for granted in the world that young persons ought to be allowed to sow their "wild oats," and then it is hoped that afterwards they will settle down. But these wild oats are more easily sown than reaped, and many men might weep tears of blood to think of what a harvest has sprung from them. We sinned very carelessly and joyously, and led others into sin without a thought of the future, and now that we are converted to God we have to look back, and wish in vain that others could be turned from the dangerous paths into which we led them. I do not want to bring any needless bitterness into the heart of any person who is saved and pardoned, but I should like to cast a dash of gall into men's hearts who have never sought the Savior, and who are growing gray. I would make them seriously reflect upon the mischief of their early days. Alas, you cannot undo the evils of your sins! Your children trained amiss, with a bad example before them, are not now to be tutored for God; your acquaintances who have copied your habits, are not now to be reclaimed. Perhaps some of you have had companions with whom you used to drink and feast, who are now in Hell and brought there very much through you. How sad should be those depraved men who have been partners in the sin of guilty women, or women who have lured giddy young men into the paths of vice. I feel sure that even when such persons repent and find forgiveness the thought of the past cuts like a knife. I can hear one of them sighing. "Alas, I cannot undo my deeds! Those with whom I sinned are gone, gone where I cannot reach them even with a prayer; and although others linger upon earth they are gone now to such extremes of sin that it is almost hopeless to think that they shall be reclaimed, and all this is due to my youthful follies. Oh that

I could wipe them out, even with my blood!" "Deliver us from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of our salvation."

Many unconverted persons here will perhaps feel—I trust they may—the point of the next observation, namely, that *false teaching involves the guilt of bloodshed.* Some, who afterwards have become ministers of Christ, were at one time ministers of Arianism, Socinianism, Deism, or infidelity. Now the man who leads the young mind astray from the Truth of God, and guides youth into doubt and skepticism, must not think that he shall go unscathed. Those who err from the Truth perish, but their blood shall be laid at the door of the teachers who first sowed the seeds of evil thought within them. There was a despot in Italy who was known to shoot poisoned adders at passersby in the street, and there are men who delight to shoot sharp, stinging doubts into young minds. They will not deny any one particular grand Truth of God, but they will insinuate covert doubts, which assail the whole Gospel system. Pity, Brothers and Sisters, heartily pity those false teachers who have been able to attain to eminence by the fatal gift of unsanctified talent. What must be at their door who have denied the Deity of Christ, who have despised and spoken slightingly of God's Atonement? To have beguiled the minds of men till they have looked upon you as their oracle, and then to have taught them false doctrine—what is more horrible? With what solemnity is the teacher's office invested when we remember that God will require at our hands the blood of souls!

You who are now converted, but were once infidels, or miscalled Unitarians, I pray you go not to your bed tonight till you breathe this prayer, "Deliver me, O God, from the blood of souls! Let none go down to the Pit cursing me because I taught them error, and led them away from the Fountain of Life. Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation." It is a dastardly thing to poison the wells of a city, but what is it to poison the well of the Truth of God and make soul-thirst the medium of soul-ruin? It was an accursed thing in the old story for a man to pour poison into his sleeping brother's ear, and yet hundreds have done the same, sometimes by word of mouth, and still more often by infamous literature. Who knows the evil caused by evil books, scattered broadcast over the land, which, like the ashes that Moses hurled into the sky, have brought a grievous plague wherever they have fallen? O you authors and editors of newspapers, who teach ungodly principles and sneer at Divine Truth, take heed lest the blood of souls cry out against you, as the blood of Abel did against the first manslayer.

Our text has a voice in another direction. Some men actually trade in luring others into sin; by this craft they get their wealth. Pandering to the drunken and vicious habits of the multitude, they literally fatten on the ruin of those whose evil tastes they gratify and excite. Satan has many soul-hunters in his pay who hunt for the precious life. It is an amusement to some to decoy others into the snares and meshes of the Evil One. I have known beings of this class. I will paint one whom I knew who is gone to his last account. He was an old drunkard, hoary with

years of infamy, his language—profanity, his life—abomination. I would blush to mention the sins of which he would speak with a delighted leer. Never came there a young man within his range but what he tempted him to the tavern and to places still worse. If one saw any youth of the congregation walking with that man you knew that he would soon be missing from the House of Prayer. It was impossible for a person to be five minutes with that old wretch without being infected by the contagion of his filthiness. His whole heart went with his foul tongue in the work of depraving the youthful mind. It was a sight to see the man's lips as he spoke lusciously of a dainty sin, and to see the contempt that was in his countenance as the minister of righteousness looked sorrowfully at the destroyer and his victim. His joy was greatest when he had been the means of casting down a professor of religion, or could see young Hopeful become as vile as himself! When he saw those die, whom he had led into sin and educated in profanity, till they became as bad as himself, no twitch of conscience ever came over him! When he died and was buried, one almost thanked God for his removal, for he was a most fearful hindrance to the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Oh, should I address some such who delight to sing lascivious songs, and to talk loosely; God forgive you, you great sinner, and take that black heart out of you, and give you a new heart and a right spirit, for, if He does not, double damnation must be your portion, since as He who, by His Grace, turns many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever, so shall you who have turned many to unrighteousness be plunged in the blackness of darkness forever.

This I dare say comes home to but very few, indeed I trust to none of you here; but the next point may touch us all in some respects. *Bad example* is a way by which the blood of souls may come upon us. If a man should live in a densely populous neighborhood, and should carry on a trade which sent forth deadly fumes into the air, so that everybody who breathed them would be infected with disease and die, who could acquit him of murder? Granted that he clearly knows that the fumes which he makes are deadly, if he, for any hope of gain, causes such ruin, he deserves to die himself. But what is bad example? Is not that in the family and in the social circle just such a deadly vapor? I spoke just now of bad teaching, but bad example is even more dangerous, because its range is wider. Bad example reaches those who would not have listened to false doctrine, but who receive the poison through their eyes. How do you know, Mother, but that the girl who breaks your heart learns her first sin from you? Father, can you be so angry with your child when you are not quite sure but that he has imitated you? Employer, you, the other day, spoke very severely about a certain employee who forfeited your trust—are you sure there was not some irregularity in your conduct which misled him? Every man, especially in a great city like this, is responsible not only for himself but for his neighbors, and there are some of us who are like the church clock—other people set their watches by us. It becomes such of us as are religious teachers to be particularly

careful. There are some things which I feel I might do, as far as I am concerned, which I believe I might do without causing any personal hurt, but I dare not do them for the sake of many who would take license from my example to do a great deal more than I would do, and would make me the horse on which they would put the saddle of their sin.

Christian parents, you must not always say, "I can do this." Yes, but would you like everybody else to do it, because, if it is unsafe for one, it seems to me, you have no business to touch it. "If meat offends my brother, I will eat no meat while the world stands," is a grand old Christian saying of one who was not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles. We must be careful even of indifferent things, but when it comes to those things which are positively evil, the bad example of a Christian is 10 times worse than that of one who is not a Christian, for if I see a sinner commit sin, his example is poison, but it is labeled. The inconsistent life of a professor is unlabeled poison, and I am very likely to be injured by it. Inconsistent Christians, false professors, you who have a name to live and are dead, take care lest bloodshed be at your door, and much of it, too.

But these are things of which the ungodly have their share, and therefore I come now to say a few quiet words to the Christian only. I want to single out those Brothers and Sisters who love the Lord, and who are saved from the wrath to come through Him. I want to ask you, Do you not think that you and I may have been guilty of the blood of souls, though we are set by God to be instrumentally their salvation? Though we are the lights of the world and the salt of the earth, yet may we not have been darkness, and salt that has lost its savor? Answer, I pray you, such questions as these. May we not have bloodshed laid to us from *neglect of family duties?* I fear that this is one of the sins of this age. The Puritans were noted for the care in which they brought up their children; they never fell into the fault of sparing the rod, and their children were catechized every Sunday, prayed for and wept over, and the Puritan household was a very Heaven upon earth. But oh, if some of us see our children running into sin, and growing up to be thoughtless, careless, and giddy, what can we say, who shall be to blame? Are there none here, like Eli, who have only said to their children, when they have done wrong, "My sons, why do you do this?" but have let them go unchastised? Remember the character of Hophni and Phinehas, and the message of Samuel concerning them. "Thus says the Lord, I will do a thing at which both the ears of everyone who hears shall tingle: I will judge the house of Eli because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Let us take heed, lest God bring the same on us. Oh, Sirs, it is no small charge to be a parent, and to neglect that charge brings no small guilt upon us. When I see so many children of Christians turn out worse than others, when I find some of the sons of ministers among the ringleaders in sin, what can I do but pray that I may sooner die than have such a curse fall upon myself? If any of us have neglected

home duties, let us beware lest we have the blood of our children laid at our door.

Have we not often *neglected the souls of seekers* in distress who would become very glad of our attention? At our meeting for prayer and fasting last Tuesday, a Brother who was, I think, the best man among us, made a confession of cowardice, and we all looked at him and could not understand how he could be a coward; for a bolder man I do not know. He told us that there was a man in his congregation who was a wealthy man. If he had been a poor man, he would have spoken to him about his soul; but, being a wealthy man, he thought it would be taking too much liberty. At last, one of the members happened to say to him, "Mr. So-and-So, have you found a Savior?" and bursting into tears, the man said, "Thank you for speaking to me; I have been in distress for months, and thought the minister might have spoken to me. Oh, I wish he had. I might have found peace." I am afraid, that often you good people have sinners convicted of sin sitting beside you in your place of worship, and when the sermon is over, you ought to get a word with them—you might be the means of their comfort—but you forget it, and you go your way.

Now, is this a thing to be forgotten, as if it were no great offense? Let me give you a picture which may set it forth. See yonder poor wretches whose ship has gone down at sea, they have constructed a poor tottering raft, and have been floating on it for days; their supply of bread and water is exhausted, and they are famishing, they have bound a handkerchief to a pole and hoisted it, and a vessel is within sight. The captain of the ship takes his telescope, looks at the object, and knows that it is a shipwrecked crew. "Oh!" he says to his men, "we are in a hurry with our cargo, we cannot stop to look after an unknown object; it may be somebody perishing, and it may not be, but it is not our business," and he stays his course. His neglect has murdered those who died on the raft. Yours is much the same case, only it is worse, because you deal with immortal souls, and the captain only dealt with bodies which he allowed to die. Oh, my Brother, I implore you before the Lord, never let this sin lay at your door again; but if there is one who is impressed, and needs a word of comfort, fly on the wings of Mercy to such a soul, and help cheer him as God enables you.

May we not be guilty, in the next place, of *neglecting to warn many who are not impressed?* If I saw a man go reeling on towards a precipice, and knew, as he went staggering forward, that in a few minutes he would go over the edge and be plunged into eternity, if I did not shout out and warn him to draw back, I should feel that when he fell I had a share in his death. When you hear a funeral bell toll for a neighbor, can you say, "If that soul is gone to its last account, I did at least tell him of the way of mercy"? No, I fear there are many now slumbering in the sepulcher whom you can never warn now, but whom you ought to have warned—your brothers, your sisters, your own children, your next door neighbors—they are gone, gone from where they never can return, but among the things they will have to say at the Day of Judgment will be

this, that they can bear witness against you that you never warned them to flee from the wrath to come. O God, we are all guilty here. "Deliver us from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of our salvation."

Further, have we not been guilty of the blood of souls by *exposing them to danger?* When a father puts his boy apprentice, if he only cares about his worldly gain, and not about his soul's interest, I cannot acquit him, nor will God acquit him. Parents have sometimes put their girls to school and their boys to trade where if they had obtained any good it would have been a miracle, and where if they met with mischief it was only what they might expect. Now it is according to law that if I expose my child to the cold and it perishes through my negligence I am punished; surely it must be so with sin. So with our servants, our neighbors, and work people, if we expect them to do for us what we would not do for ourselves we are guilty of their sins. Some here may possibly be carrying on unnecessary trades which require working men to toil all Sunday (works of necessity, of course, I speak not of), but there are systems of trading which for no justifiable reason involve the keeping away of the men employed from a place of worship; now when these men are lost, I ask at whose door will their blood lie? Who had the profits of their labor? Who fattened on their gains? Who sucked the very blood of their souls to coin it into wealth for himself? If there is such an one, let him cease from the sin, and pray, "Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation."

Christian, do you not think that sometimes you may have been guilty from *unholy silence?* When I hear God's name profaned and offer no rebuke, but take it quietly, is there no sin there? When I see my neighbor going into sin, and have an opportunity of speaking and do not, is that silence without blame? When I go up and down the street, and meet people in my ordinary avocation to whom I might speak of Christ and never do; when they perish, shall I be clear? Oh the thousands that some of us come in contact with, and yet leave them as if we had no care about their eternal state! Shall we be clear, Brothers and Sisters, shall we be clear?

May not another sin also be charged upon some of you? Some have a way, not only of doing no good, but doing a deal of mischief by their *harsh conversation to young beginners.* I have known elderly professors who, instead of encouraging the young, would seem as though they would snap the child's head off if it spoke of Divine things; who doubt the possibility of the conversion of little ones, and will ask knotty questions, and raise difficult points to perplex those who have but lately found Christ. They delight to insinuate that the convert's joy is nothing but mere excitement, and they do all they can to thrust seeking souls into despair. Unlike the Master, who never broke the bruised reed, they break all they can, and, unlike He who never quenched the smoking flax, they would, if they could, quench even those who have begun to blaze. Is there no guilt here? Are there none such in this House? I know there are! May they have Divine Grace to feel the sin and to plead for mercy!

Unhallowed levity about Divine things is another home-born sin. Do we ever trifle about God's Word? Are we not tempted to joke and utter a silly jest when it would have been prudent to have urged a warning? I fear, Brothers and Sisters, and fear sorrowfully, that many of us who ought to know better are verily guilty here. To trifle with eternal things is no small crime.

But here is a point upon which I would speak more earnestly, still—how often have we *withheld prayer* concerning others? We know they are perishing, but we do not pray for them; we are conscious that their state will be one of woe, but yet no tears flow from our inhuman eyes, and our spirits are not affected. Neglected closets, I shall call upon them to speak against us. I shall leave our lack of prayer in private to be a matter of personal confession; but I am afraid that after having thought it over we shall feel we have been guilty of bloodshed.

Then there is *a general lack of earnestness* especially chargeable upon us who are ministers. That I should ever have preached to you as I have sometimes done ought to break my heart, and that some of you should teach in Sunday school as you teach ought to cause you deep regret, and that you should go even about tract distributing in so cold a manner as you sometimes do should make you smite upon your breasts. Oh if we were half as earnest to serve God as others are to win gold, what success we might expect! And we have not had it because of our lack of earnestness! Deliver us from the guilt of bloodshed, O God!

II. In the second place, let us make AN EARNEST CONFESSION. Let us not deny our responsibility, or we shall be like Cain, who said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Shun a Cainish spirit. Let us not try to shift the responsibility to God's shoulders by saying, "God's decree will be fulfilled." That is true, but Divine sovereignty is no excuse for human negligence. Let us feel, "We are guilty here," and do not let us murmur, "Well, we have a right to do as we like; it is a voluntary work." It is so; but, Brothers and Sisters, we are debtors unto the Jew and Gentile. Loved with such mercy as that which we have received, we ought to have done more for souls, and we are guilty because we have not done it. Let us not soothe ourselves with, "Well, we will do better in the future." Look to the past—how can you undo that? And the souls that have gone, past recall, down the cataract of death—what can you do for them? Bestir yourself! Bestir yourself for the future; for there you can do much, but for the past, what is to be done but weep! Let us make a clean breast of it when we are alone, and solemnly confess that we have been guilty of the blood of souls.

III. In the third place, our text has in it AN EARNEST PRAYER which I commend to you. You observe it is addressed *to God.* It is not a resolution made in his own strength, but it is addressed to God. "Deliver me, O God." You observe that it is addressed to the God of *Salvation.* Thanks be to His name, He can save us; He is the God of Salvation. It is His prerogative to forgive; it is His very name and office to save those who seek His face. Let us go to the God of Salvation. Better still, the text calls

Him the God of *my* salvation. Yes, blessed be His name, guilty as I am I am saved—though the blood of others once lay at my door, and my sin humbles me, yet through Jesus' precious blood I can rejoice in the God of *my* salvation.

Then look at the word "Deliver." It has two meanings. "Deliver me from the *guilt* of the *past*—whatever I may have been in the years gone by forgive it, but Lord, deliver me from the power of it for the future." If I am a minister, Lord, make me more prayerful; if I am a Sunday school teacher, help me to teach the children as though they would be dead before we met again; if I am a father or a mother, help me to instruct my dear children as though their salvation rested upon me; if I am a neighbor, let me not neglect the street, or court, or lane where I live; if I am a citizen, let me not neglect the claims of those who live in the same city with me; if I am a Christian, do not let me be a dark lantern, do not allow me to be unsavory salt. Some of you professors are of no use to anybody. I know some professing Christians who hoard their money just as if they did not owe Christ anything. They never give to the cause of God, and their gold and their silver are red with blood, the blood of those who might have had the Gospel preached to them if there had been the means of sending it. I know others who come in and out, and occupy seats and sing and pray as others do, but take no part in the work of the Church, who are useless idlers, like the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with the children of Israel. If such are present now, the Lord send the darts of conviction through them. If you are His people, I hope you have the Grace to receive the rebuke in the spirit in which it is sent to you and profit by it. If you have been bought with blood, live as one who is not his own. If you are a mere worldling, why do you come here and make a profession of Christianity? But if you have been saved, ask to be delivered from the great sin of bloodshed!

IV. The Psalmist ends with A COMMENDABLE VOW. It is about the only vow that I can advise any of you to make. He says, first of all, if God will deliver him he will sing. And I vow I will. If I am only able to say as George Fox said, when he was dying—honest Quaker as he was—"I am clear"—oh if I can say, "I am clear," I will sing indeed. It is enough to make any man sing if he can be minister to such a congregation as this and be clear. Sometimes when I have gone down out of the pulpit, and somebody has said, "There are six or 7,000 people without excuse because they have heard the Gospel," I have said, "Yes, it is so," but I have thought, "Have I preached it as earnestly as I ought?" And many a time it has made me toss on my bed to think of the responsibility of this mass of human beings, and the 20,000 or more who regularly read the sermons as they come from the press. Who is sufficient for these things? Truly a saved minister will be an everlasting wonder!

Then it is said, "My tongue shall sing *aloud*." Oh yes indeed who can sing in any other style if such a mercy as this is afforded us? If indeed we are found faithful, we will not sing in a whisper. If we have discharged our conscience, and no man can say, "You have been unfaithful to me,"

our tongue shall sing *aloud*. But note the subject, note the subject! It does not say my tongue shall sing aloud of *my* faithfulness, of *my* integrity, and of *my* earnestness. Oh no! When I have done my best, when I am delivered from all guilt of bloodshed, and my tongue begins to sing it shall not sing of anything but *Your Righteousnes*s, YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, O Jesus! We cannot sing of ourselves, we must sing of the finished work of a precious Savior. "Ah," said one to a dying saint, "you have fought a good fight!" "Ah," said he, "do not tell me that, I am thinking of how Jesus Christ said, 'It is finished.'" That is solid comfort for our souls. We must come as sinners still. I would like to have some such verse sung over my dead body as was sung over dear Rowland Hill, when they buried him under his pulpit at Surrey Chapel. He had asked them to sing the hymn—

"***Jesus, Your blood and Righteousness***
My beauty are, my glorious dress;"

and that verse was sung slowly and solemnly—

"When from the dust of death I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies,
Even then shall this be all my plea,
'Jesus has lived and died for me.'"

Yes, we shall sing and sing aloud too, but we shall not sing of goodness, but of the Righteousness of our dear Redeemer

Now, poor Sinner, what do you say of Christ's Righteousness? Do you not see that you are guilty of many sins? Oh that you may have Divine Grace to confess them! Remember the Righteousness of Christ can wash away all sin, and however black and foul we may have been, we have but to come to the Fountain filled with blood, and if we wash there, we shall be white as snow. The Lord give us such a washing, and we will sing aloud of His Righteousness!

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A SAVIOR SUCH AS YOU NEED
NO. 714

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 7, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us: for after He had said before, 'This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them,' then He adds, 'Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.' Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin."
Hebrews 10:15-18.

WE have all heard of Utopia, that imaginary land where all things are such as one might desire. A man who would conceive a spiritual Utopia might well be supposed to say, "What a delightful thing it would be, if a man could, in this life, be completely saved! What a priceless gift would be bestowed upon a man if he could know, by Infallible Authority, that his every sin was pardoned as to the past, and that, as to his sins in the future, there is provided the certainty of pardon! And what if such a man should also possess the invaluable blessing of another nature, a nature which would be prone to good, just as his present nature is inclined to sin, a nature which would prompt him to every holy thing, and spur him forward to the loftiest aims! What a thrice happy man would he be who could feel that death itself would be gain to him, and that the trials of life will cause him no real loss! He would be blest indeed who could rest secure at all times, because whenever the Messenger of Doom might come he was ready to meet him, prepared with the absolute certainty that he would enter into Immortal Glories!"

A vision of such a supposable blessing as this has crossed the minds of many, but they have permitted it to melt into thin air, and have said, "The thing is impossible; but, if it could be attained, what a blessing it would be!"

Now, I have come here this morning to tell you that this priceless blessing is obtainable; no, more, that it has been obtained, and is now enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of persons now living upon the face of the earth, and that you, my dear Hearers, shall every one of you enjoy it if you are led to put your trust in that Savior who came into this world on purpose to bring a perfect salvation to the sons of men. It is true that every man who has believed in Jesus is perfectly pardoned. There is against him no sin in God's Book, and God has blotted out all his transgressions. As for the sins which he may yet commit, the blood of

Jesus has already been shed to make Atonement for those possible sins, and they are already in God's esteem carried away by the great Sin-Bearer. As to his nature, the Believer is a renewed man; albeit that his old nature is still inclined to that which is evil, yet he possesses within him an immortal principle, an incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever. And as to his dying or his living, these are but small matters to him. If he lives in the flesh he serves God, and if he dies he only falls asleep to wake up in Jesus Christ's likeness to serve Him yet more perfectly above. Thus, what was held to be Utopian is but the common possession of every Christian, and this supposable good, which might have been thirsted after if it had not been obtainable, is actually in the possession and enjoyment of every Believer in Christ Jesus.

I. I must not tarry, but conduct you at once to the text—IT IS THIS WHICH CONSTITUTES THE GLORY AND SUPERIORITY OF THE NEW COVENANT OF GRACE—NAMELY THAT IT GIVES TO ALL WHO ARE INTERESTED IN IT PERFECT SALVATION.

Under the Old Covenant, no one who rested in its many sacrifices ever was or could be perfected. The worshipper brought his turtledoves or his young pigeons, his bullock or his ram, and these were offered; he went away feeling that he had been obedient to a ceremonial command, and therefore he enjoyed some degree of short-lived content. After a time he sinned again, and he had to say to himself, "I must provide another victim; I must go once more up to the tabernacle, or to the temple, for I have further sin to be washed away." And even when this was done, after awhile he must come again. He could never come to a point in his life in which he could say, "It is finished; there has been a sufficient sacrifice offered; the atonement is complete; I have no need from now on to bring another offering." Such a state of mind was not supposable under the old Jewish Law. There was always needed a renewal of sacrifice, because it was always an imperfect thing, never finished, but always needing an additional sacrifice.

It is true that the true saints under the old dispensation, did, I have no doubt, obtain peace and rest, but that was because they looked through and *beyond* the burnt offering upon the visible altar to the great Sin-Offering upon the invisible Altar of God's Eternal Purpose, and virtually entered into the New Covenant. For instance, David, in the 51st Psalm, passed right through the veil of outward ordinances, and stood before the true Mercy Seat in the secret of God. He says, "You desire not sacrifice, You delight not in burnt offering." He gets away from the ceremonial to the evangelical, and he rested in the real and true power of the Sacrifice which was to be presented in the later days. The mass of the Jewish people, the great multitude of the nation, rested content with that

which was outward, and they found no solid peace, for their very worship gave them a remembrance of sin every year.

Let us rejoice that it is not so under the Gospel system. The Sacrifice *has* been offered once, offered in such a way that complete Atonement has been made. Sin *has* been pardoned, and the sinner who has taken that one finished Sacrifice to be the ground of his trust feels that there is nothing left for him to do; it is all done for him. He has not to add a single stone to the building, for the topmost pinnacle, the Lord Jesus, has brought forth with shouts of, "Grace, Grace unto it," crying with His expiring breath, "It is finished!"

Our text tells us that in two points the Old Covenant was far behind the new—first, in the matter of Sanctification the Old Covenant did not do what the new one accomplishes, for the new writes God's Law upon our hearts and upon our minds, whereas the Old Covenant was only written out on tablets of stone; and secondly, the Old Covenant could not put away the guilt of sin, whereas the New Covenant runs on this wise—"Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more."

1. To begin, then, with the first point, *he who came to the outward and visible rites of Jewish ceremony was not sanctified.* He might stand as long as he would at the altar, and watch the blood poured out in vast quantities, but he would go away and sin just as he had sinned before. There were, no doubt, tens of thousands of persons who were familiar with all the ceremonies of the Jewish Law, but who had no holy thoughts excited by it. They were neither hindered from sin nor impelled to virtue by anything which they beheld, for they only looked upon the outward, and never gazed into the inward meaning, or felt the true spiritual power, and so they obtained no benefit as to the sanctification of their lives by all that they saw. I do not doubt that tens of thousands heard the Law of Moses read, but were not led to keep it. Did not the people stand shivering around Mount Sinai to hear that Law proclaimed as it never had been proclaimed since, and yet what effect had it upon them? A sort of stupid terror seized them, so that they desired the Voice of the Lord to be hushed, for they could not endure to hear it; but a very few days afterwards they took their earrings from their ears and made them into a molten calf, and bowing down before it, they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt." All the quaking of the earth, all the moving of that smoking hill, all the thunder of the pealing trumpet, could not make Israel obedient. They knew the Law, but they would not keep it. So far as its influence upon their lives was concerned, the Law with all the ceremonies which clustered around it was a failure. It did not make them holy; it could not.

But *the Gospel is no such failure.* Observe that those who come under the influence of the New Covenant really are sanctified, and that by

means calculated to so Divine an end. The New Covenant does not give me a law, it is content to tell me that "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the Law shall fail." But what does the New Covenant do? Instead of bringing me a law it says, "I will give you love instead of law; you shall not be under the principle of Law any longer, but you shall be ruled by the principle of Divine Grace. Instead of saying to you, 'You shall do this, and you shall not do the other,' I will make you love your God; and when you love Him then you will say, 'What is my God's will shall be my will, and that which my God abhors I will abhor for His sake.'" Law is a principle of power with perfect beings, but it is not powerful enough to keep such wretched hearts as ours in subjection; it rather provokes hostility and excites rebellion—but when love comes in, this Omnipotent Principle sweetly compels us.

Let me give you an illustration of the difference between the Old and the New Covenants drawn from human affairs. There are two schoolmasters; one of them with many threats issues rules and laws for his pupils as to what they shall do and what they shall not do, and certain severe punishments are threatened for disobedience, the rod being the great governor of the school. Now, I can suppose these children to be mere hypocrites, obeying when the master was present, but utterly destitute of any principle of order or obedience; glad enough to run into riotous disorder at the first instant the master's back is turned. But the other master, by his kindness, his gentle reasoning, and loving instructions, has won the hearts of his pupils, and he has therefore no need to be always giving minute regulations, because the lads themselves knowing in their own consciences what is right to him, and having an affection for him, would be unwilling to grieve him. Men will do far more from love than we might dare to ask as a matter of duty. Napoleon's soldiers frequently achieved exploits under the influence of fervid attachment for him which no law could have required them to attempt. Had there been cold-blooded orders issued by some domineering officer, who said, "You shall do this and you shall do that," they would have mutinied against such tyranny, and yet when the favorite little corporal seizes the standard, and cries, "Come on," they will rush even to the cannon's mouth out of love to their gallant leader.

This is the difference between the Law and the Gospel. The Law says, "You shall or you shall be punished." But the Gospel says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have forgiven all your trespasses; now My love shall sweetly influence you, and the influence of inward principle shall guide you in My ways, My Law shall be written not upon stone but upon the fleshy tablets of your hearts." The Old Covenant, in all that it did, only provided precepts; but the Gospel provides the power to keep the precept. The old Law appealed to the selfishness of our corrupt

nature; the Gospel appeals to the nobler instincts of a Heaven-born life. The Law drove us, but the Gospel draws us. The Law came behind us with its dog and stick as our drovers do from the cattle markets; but the Gospel goes before us as the Eastern shepherd before his sheep, and we cheerfully follow where the Gospel leads the way. This is the difference then between the old Law and its inability to sanctify us, and the Gospel and its wonderful power to purify.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters upon whom the Gospel has exercised its power, you know that the Love of Christ constrains you. Before your conversion you used to hear moral essays, and to yield your assent to the excellence of virtue, but when temptation attacked you, what help could mere moral essays afford you? What strength to resist sin did you find in your belief in the excellence of virtue? Did you not resign yourself to the energy of evil as the snow melts in the fierce heat of the sun? But now since you have been converted, you are not kept from sin by fear but by love, and you are not impelled to holiness because you are afraid of Hell, but because, being saved from the wrath to come and loved with an Everlasting Love, you cannot be so faithless to your heart's love and to every hallowed impulse of gratitude as to turn back to the beggarly elements from which you have been delivered. What the Law could not do with its iron fetters, the Gospel has done with its silken bonds. If God had thundered at you, you would have grown proud like Pharaoh, when he said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" But when the Lord Jesus spoke softly to you, you bowed before Him, and said, "He is my Lord and my God." The blustering wind of the Law made you bind about yourself the cloak of your sins, but the genial warmth of the sun of the Gospel constrained you to cast away the garments of your sin, and fly to the Savior. Melted and influenced by His Love, the icy bosom flows in streams of devout affection and sacred love where the glorious summer of heavenly Grace pours its full influence upon it, while all the howling winds of winter did but lock it in more iron bonds. Yes, there is a sanctifying power in the principle of the Gospel which is not to be found in the principle of the Law.

2. The second point concerns *pardon of sin.* The Law, as we have observed, could never put away sin. There was always a fresh offering needed, because the stain still remained. But it is not so with the Gospel. Brothers and Sisters, if you and I were now living as Jews under that old dispensation, when we came home from offering our sin-offering we could not be sure that we were pardoned. We should gravely question it, for our understanding would say to us, "What connection is there between the killing of a lamb or a bullock and the pardon of sin?" And the conviction would force itself upon our understanding, that the blood of bulls or of goats could not take away sin. We would, therefore, feel

uncertain as to whether any pardon was received; moreover, we would never feel safe, for, albeit that yesterday we offered the sin-offering, and did feel secure, yet we have sinned since yesterday, and in what state are we now? Suppose we die before we present another lamb, or suppose we expire just at the point when we had nearly completed a sufficient sacrifice, but yet some portion of sin is left—what then? Why, as a Jew, I could never have felt safe. I might have felt hopeful, but that would have been all; for there would always have been the dark thought, "Perhaps I have not been fully obedient," and if I have failed in one point, I hear the rumbling of that curse in my ears, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them."

But, Beloved, the Gospel yields us something solid to rest upon, for under the Gospel we have offered for us not a typical, but *a real Sacrifice for sin.* This is an old story, but the Christian cannot hear it too often. Once in the world God Himself descended from the skies and was veiled in our inferior clay. Here on earth God's eternal Son lived and dwelt like one of us, and in the fullness of time, when the sins of all His people had been laid upon Him, He was seized by the officers of Justice, and was taken away as having our sins upon His own Person, and on the tree was He fastened that He might die, the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God. Christ stood in the place of His people, and when God's Wrath fell upon sin it fell upon Him, and spent itself upon His Person. There is no Wrath left in God's heart now against those for whom the Savior died. Christ has suffered all. The penalty which was due to our guilt has not been remitted, but has been paid to the utmost farthing by God Himself in the Person of His own dear Son. That death of Jesus Christ on Calvary has a sublimity about it which language fails to convey to the human mind, for He who there as Man was made an Offering for sin was none other than God Himself. Is it not written, "The flock of God which He has purchased with His own blood"? (Acts 20:28). He who died upon the tree was not mere Man, but, "Very God of very God," and hence there is an Infinite Efficacy in the pangs which He endured, and in the death to which He became obedient, by which the sin of man is put away from the Presence of God.

My Brothers and Sisters, when you and I have been by faith to the Cross, we do not ask with the ancient Israelites what connection there can be between the Sacrifice and pardon; on the contrary, we can clearly see a very distinct and logical connection between the Sacrifice of Jesus and the pardon of sin, for if Christ died for me I *must* be pardoned. How can it be possible that if Christ has suffered in my place I should suffer too? Would this be just? How can it be consistent with justice to punish the Substitute and those also for whom He stood? A man employs a substitute for himself to serve in the army; is he to be called upon to

serve in person, too? A man finds another person to pay his debts for him; is he to pay his own debts after that himself? Surely not, for the thing is done and done with. I say it, not fearing to be misunderstood in the connection in which I say it, that the sin of God's people is *non est,* has ceased to be, for Christ Jesus destroyed it by burying it in His tomb. The Prophet has said, "The Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all," and since Jesus has taken upon Himself that sin, and has been punished for that sin, there remains nothing now for which God's people can be punished, for their sins God has punished already, and it is according to neither Justice nor Mercy that sin should be atoned for twice, that first the bleeding Sufferer should endure, and then those for whom He suffered. Surely God is not unjust to forget the Savior's work and labor of love. Now there was no connection you see between the blood of a bull and the putting away of sin, but there is a great connection between the blood of Christ and the putting away of sin, because that was shed instead of *our* blood. He died in the place of the multitude of men of Adam born who put their trust in Him; He was their Substitute and their complete Salvation.

You know this doctrine well enough, for you have heard it hundreds of times. Do you all believe it? Are you all resting on it? That is the point, to rest on this is to build on a Rock which will not be shaken, even when earth's old columns bow, and the stars fall like fig leaves from the tree.

Further, not only has a real Sacrifice been offered, but *sin is therefore really atoned for.* I want to bring every Believer and every unbeliever, too, to face this Truth of God. What sin is that which I have committed? Do I trust Christ? If I unfeignedly trust Him, then the punishment due to my sin has been exacted already. Have I been a swearer? My blasphemy was laid on Christ before I was born, and I cannot be punished at God's bar for that blasphemy because Christ has been punished for it. Have I been a thief; have I been a liar; have I been a drunkard? Or, have my sins, instead of that, been merely sins of the heart rather than of the life? Have I been an unbeliever, hard-hearted, callous, careless? Whatever my sins may have been, they were numbered on Christ's head of old when He was the Scapegoat for my sins, and all the Wrath of God which was due to all the sins which I have committed, or ever shall commit, if I am a Believer, was borne by my Redeemer, and He received for my debts a full receipt from the hand of Everlasting Justice, and my sins are forever put away by Him. What does the Scripture say? "He finished transgression, and made an end of sin." What a wonderful word—"made an end of sin"! And then, again, "Once in the end of the world has Christ appeared to put away sin." You know what that means: to put it right away so that you cannot find it any more. He has made an end, then, of His people's sin and put it away. Christ by suffering what was due to God on account

of sin has lifted up sin from His people and destroyed it, stamping it out as men stamp out sparks of fire, casting it right into the depths of the sea as men cast away that which they wish never to see again. Surely this gives us solid ground for comfort if we now are resting upon Him.

It appears from the text yet further, that since a real Sacrifice has been offered, and sin has been really atoned for, *all the sin of those who are in the Covenant is gone.* No, do not think I speak too boldly; what does the text say? "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." They are gone then. Every Believer in Christ is as clear before God as though he had never sinned. If he had not sinned he would have worn the innocence of a creature, but now though he has sinned he has been washed in the blood of Jesus, and clothed with the Righteousness of Christ he wears the Righteousness of the Creator Himself. If I had been a perfectly innocent creature I could have gone up to Heaven on the footing of mortal merit. Yet, sinner as I am, I rest in Jesus, and now I shall enter Heaven on the footing of immortal merit. I could have gone there had I never sinned, enrobed in a white garment, but I shall go there with a garment quite as white now, only I shall have to sing, "I have washed my robe, and made it white in the blood of the Lamb." Christian, let not your past sin lead you into despair. Hate it, repent of it, but do not let it depress your spirit, or destroy your joy, for your sin is forgiven. "I have blotted out like a cloud your iniquities, and like a thick cloud your transgressions." The Lord has cast your sins into the depths of the sea. "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be white as snow."

All the Believer's sins are gone, and what is more, *they are gone on the highest authority,* for what does the text say?—*"Thus says the Lord,* their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." Now, if the Jew received pardon from the lips of a priest he might not be quite sure that the priest had any right to give it, and I am sure if I received absolution from any priest on earth I should feel as if it was not worth the shilling which I paid for it. What right has he to pardon me? I never offended him. If I have offended him he can pardon me for the offense as it stands against himself; but it is clear that nobody can pardon except the person offended. If anybody insulted me and one of you forgave him for it, I should say, "Well, much good may it do him." Who can forgive but he who has been injured? Now, the pardon of our sin is no good except it comes from God Himself, and the text says, *"Thus says the Lord,* their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." God himself speaks here, not through the mediate interposition of some earth-born priest, but He speaks directly Himself, "I forgive them, I pardon them, I cleanse them, their sins and iniquities I will remember no more."

And then observe, *this pardon is forever.* It is not, "Their sins and iniquities I will forgive for the present," but, "I will remember them no more." Sin once pardoned can never be imputed to a man again. God never plays fast and loose with us. He does not say today, "I absolve you," and then the next day accuse us. The Apostle Paul used this as an argument. He says, "Who is he who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" And, as if nobody could, he answers triumphantly, "It is God who justifies." He gives as a reason why none can condemn that fact that Christ has died and risen again. Sin forgiven comes not back to us. Let none of you labor under fear of that. Your old sins are buried and they shall never have a resurrection.

Then there comes in, to complete the whole, *the sweet satisfaction that our sins are gone in the most complete sense.* God says He will remember them no more. It is possible for God to forget, then? Can Infinite Wisdom cease to remember? Can the Eternal Mind cast a thing completely out of itself? Beloved, He speaks after the manner of men, and you know what a man means when he says he will never remember a thing. I have heard some say, "Well, I can forgive it, but I will never forget it," which being interpreted, means, "I never will forgive it." But God when He forgives forgets too; that is to say, He will make no difference in His future dealings with us on account of our past sins. He will treat His children as though they had always been obedient children, and had never revolted. When the prodigal is received and forgiven, he is not put at the end of the table, below the salt, or sent into the kitchen with the servants, as if his faults were forgiven but yet remembered. He is invited to the table, and he feasts there upon the best the house affords—the fatted calf is killed, the ring is on his finger, and there are music and dancing for him, as sweet music and as joyous dancing as for the constantly obedient elder son; no more, for there is more joy over him than over the son who went not astray.

Brothers and Sisters, God in this sense forgets His people's sins. Why is it then that you and I sometimes are desponding in spirit concerning past sin? It is right of us to hate it, to sorrow over it, but it is not right for us to get to fearing and trembling as to the punishment of that sin. Why do we? I will tell you. It is because we forget the Cross. That repentance which does not look to the Cross is a legal repentance, and it will breed misery. True Repentance looks to Jesus bleeding on the tree and she weeps, but as she weeps she says, "Lord, I do not weep for this sin because I believe I shall ever be punished for it; I know I never shall, for I see my sin punished in the Person of my Savior; I hear the whip that ought to have fallen on my back falling cruelly on Jesus; I see the wounds that ought to have been made in my soul and body made in my Lord's Person; the bitter cry of anguish which ought to have come from a

soul like mine I hear coming from Him as He cries, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' and I mourn for my sin because it made the Savior bleed; I mourn to think I should have been so guilty as to need that He should suffer in order that I might be delivered from my guilt."

Brothers and Sisters, beware of an unbelieving repentance, for God does not accept it. Seek to get repentance at the foot of the Cross. If you have an eye to sin, take care to have an eye to the Atonement, too. Let your eyes be full of tears, but let those tears act like magnifying glasses to your eyes to make the Cross appear a grander and a dearer thing than ever. Never let your sin shake your confidence in Christ, for if you are a great sinner, glorify Him by believing Him to be a great Savior. Do not diminish the value of the blood while you magnify the intensity of your sin. Think as badly of sin as you can, but think right gloriously of Christ, for there is no sin, however hellish or devilish, which the blood of Jesus cannot take away; and if the concentrated essence of everything that is diabolical in iniquity is found in yourself, yet "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin," and herein we must, yes, and will, rejoice!

This, then, is the superiority of the Covenant of Grace. It really does sanctify a man, supplying him with motives for holiness, and really does justify and pardon a man, actually and really taking away his sin, so that it is said of him, "His sins and iniquities I will remember no more."

We must now, very briefly, glance at the second point.

II. Secondly, THERE IS A DOCTRINE TAUGHT BY THIS, which is to be found in the 18th verse, *"Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin."* We have tried to show from the words of the text that Christ is sufficient to purify us by supplying us with holy motives, and to pardon us by His having Himself atoned for sin. The doctrine, then, is, that THERE IS NO MORE SACRIFICE FOR SIN, BECAUSE CHRIST SUPPLIES ALL THAT IS NEEDED.

Just see what a broom this Doctrine is to sweep this country from Popery, and to sweep all nations of it. Think, in the first place, of what is called, *"the unbloody sacrifice of the mass, for the quick and the dead."* What becomes of that? The Apostle says, "Where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin." Where, then, did the "mass" come from, and of what good is it? The Lord's Supper was intended to be the remembrance to us of our Lord's sufferings, instead of which it has been prostituted by the Church of Rome into the blasphemy of a pretended continual offering up of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ—a *continual* sacrifice. According to the Romish doctrine the Offering upon Calvary is not enough; the Atonement for sin is not finished; it has to be performed every day, and many times a day, in the many churches of Christendom, by certain appointed persons, so that that sacrifice is

always being offered. Do you notice how strongly the Apostle speaks in this matter? He says Christ offered a Sacrifice for sin *ONCE*. He declares that while other priests stood ministering at the altar, this Man, the Lord Jesus, offered a sacrifice ONCE, and has by that ONE offering perfected forever His Elect ones! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, the "mass" is a mass of abominations, a mass of Hell's own concocting, a crying insult against the Lord of Glory. It is not to be spoken of in any terms but those of horror and detestation! Whenever I think of another sacrifice for sin being offered, by whomever it may be presented, I can only regard it as an infamous insult to the perfection of the Savior's work.

Then, again, *what becomes of penance?* Is not penance in its essence an offering for sin? I do not care who it is who prescribes the penance, nor what it is, whether it is licking the pavement with your tongues, or wearing a hair-shirt, or laying on the whip; if it is supposed that by the mortification of the flesh men can take away my sin, this text is like a two-edged sword to pierce the inmost heart of such teaching. "Where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin." Take off your hair shirt, poor fool! Wash the stones with a dishcloth, and keep your tongue clean. There is no need for these fooleries; Christ has completed the Atonement, you need not suffer thus; you need not, like Luther, go up and down the staircase of Pilate, and think that your poor sore knees will find favor with God. Christ has suffered, God exacts no more! Do not try to supplement His gold with your dross. Do not try to add to His matchless robes the rags of your poor penance. "There is no more sacrifice for sin."

How this, again, *shuts the gates of "purgatory"!* It is held that there are some who die who are Believers, but who are not quite purified from sin, that in an after state they must undergo a purgatorial quarantine to be purged by fire, so that they may become quite complete. But, says the text, "Where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin." Beloved, when the thief died on the cross he had but just believed, and had never done a single good work, but where did he go? Well, he ought to have gone to "purgatory" by rights if ever anybody did, but instead of that, the Savior said to him, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Why? Because the ground of the man's admission into Paradise was perfect. The grounds of his admission there was Christ's work, and that is how you and I will get into Heaven, because Christ's work is finished. The thief did not go down to "purgatory," nor, blessed be His name, neither shall you nor I if we trust in the finished work of the Lord Jesus!

"Ah!" you will say, "this is meant for Catholics." Well, then, a little for yourselves. There are some of you who are quite as bad, you receive the same doctrine only in another shape. There are some here who think

they cannot be saved by Christ *because they have not had enough terrors of conscience.* "Oh," say some, "if I could dream horrible dreams, if I could feel as if I could kill myself, if I were afraid that Satan would surely have me, then I could come to Christ!" Oh, you Simpleton, do you think that this can be an offering for sin? Do you suppose that your frights, your dreams, your terrors, your unbelief, your distress of mind can help to make you fit for Christ? Come, poor Soul, without any terrors! Come as you are. Christ is enough for you. If you cannot bring a penny, come. If you are ever so empty-handed, Christ died for empty-handed sinners. He delights to meet with poor miserable beggars who have nothing of their own, that He may say, and say truly, "I have saved them completely, and I shall have all the Glory for it."

Some others of you think *that you must get your hearts softened before you can trust in Christ.* When we preach the Gospel to you, you say, "I do not feel such tenderness as I should like to feel." No, dear Friend, and you never will while you talk so, for true tenderness of heart is not obtained by shutting your eyes to the Cross. If you will not trust Christ, your heart will grow harder instead of softer, and if you set up the softness of your own heart in the place of Christ's sufferings, you will find that this unbelief of yours will make you grow more stubborn still.

"Oh," you say, *"but I cannot pray as I would wish."* Very likely, but then do you think that your prayers are to make up for Christ's work? I tell you that your prayer is a most precious thing, and that a broken heart is a precious thing, and yet your prayer and your broken heart are good for nothing if you put them in the place of Christ! You are not saved by your prayers or your brokenness of spirit, but by what Jesus did upon the Cross, and you must rest there and there only. Will you, Sinner? Will you do this, or will you still put away the comfort of the Cross and say, "No, I will not trust Christ till I can trust my own prayers"? You will never be saved while you talk so. May the Holy Spirit cure you of your unbelief!

"Ah!" says another, *"but then I cannot realize this."* Oh, I see, then is your realizing it that is to do it, is it? Not Christ's sufferings? You will have a finger in this pie, and think that surely my Master cannot do the work without your help. Oh, poor Sinner, you talk about humility, but this is the most rank pride in the world—to want to do something to save yourself! Come now, may the Holy Spirit help you to come now, as you are! Give up these dreams, these notions, these proud fancies, and come as you are, and say, "If God Himself became Man to die for sin, there must be merit enough in His death to remove my sin. Does God himself say that if I trust Christ my sins and my iniquities He will remember no more? Then I will trust Christ, I cannot help it; I *must* cast myself on Him." Oh, my dear Hearers, depend upon it you may spin, and spin, and spin, but all that you ever spin God will undo as fast as you spin it. You

will think, "Now I am in a fair way of going to Heaven." I tell you, you are in a fair way of going to Hell when you talk so. You are never on the road to Heaven unless you stand self-condemned; when you are convicted in yourselves, then God acquits you, but when you say, "Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men are," you are a poor condemned Pharisee, and your portion will be the flames! If you will come all unworthy and undeserving as you are, altogether lost and ruined, all hopeless and helpless, fit for nothing but to be swept out of God's universe; if you will acknowledge yourself to be an undutiful child, a wandering sheep and a sinner deserving His anger, then He will meet you, when you are yet a long way off He will meet you, and will fall upon your neck and kiss you, and say, "Take off his rags and clothe him."

My Savior loves sinners; my heavenly Father loves His prodigal children, but He does not love those who bring Him their own works, and their own righteousness. Away with these things, away with them! They are a stench in the nostrils of God! Your very prayers, and tears, and repentings, and humbling, if you put them in the place of the Cross of Christ, are only so much dogs' meat to be cast into the fire of Hell. He will not have you and your good works, but He will have you and your sins. He will not have you and your riches, but He will have you and your poverty. He will not have you and your fullness, but He will have you and your emptiness. He will have you as you are, just as you are. Only trust Him; trust Him, and you shall find that this New Covenant will do for you what the Old Covenant of "Do, do, do," could never do—it will sanctify you and justify you.

III. Lastly, does not this Doctrine ANSWER A QUESTION that has often been asked of me, namely, HOW IS IT THAT THERE ARE SO MANY HEARTS WHICH CAN FIND NO PEACE?

Some people are always learning, but never coming to the Truth of God. They are good people in many senses, and you are very hopeful that there is a work of Divine Grace in them, but they cannot be happy. They are always dissatisfied and discontented, and they are not only miserable themselves but they make other people miserable, and so do mischief to others' souls by their unhappiness. Now, what do you think is the reason? I am sure it is this, *they will not agree that Christ shall be All in All to them.* I tell you in God's name that I am sure in this thing I speak God's very mind; if you will have Christ to be All you may have peace and joy, no, you SHALL have it. But there is a secret something which you are clinging to. You want to share the Glory with Christ. Your mind is not brought down to this, that Christ must be altogether your Savior. Remember—

"'Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large,
While we can call one mite our own

We find no full discharge."

When we get down to perfect poverty and have nothing to depend upon but Christ, if such a soul is not saved God must have reversed His plans and changed His Nature. He never did cast out a needy sinner yet, and He said, "He who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." But oh, the stubbornness of the human will that it will not come to Christ! We may preach; we may continue to do so till we are dumb in death; good books may be read; the Bible may be well known; but oh, you will not come and trust my Master. It is such a simple thing too, and apparently so easy, and yet your proud heart kicks against it. Oh, you must come down to it, my Hearers, you must come down to it. You shall never have peace—you shall only get worse and worse with all your striving—you shall never have peace till you trust Christ. It is in this matter as it is with a man in the water; we are told that if a man who has fallen into the water kicks and plunges he is sure to be drowned, but if he throws himself back and floats he cannot sink; so it is with you. Now, leave off your kicking and your plunging, and throw yourselves back in simple confidence upon the Mercy of our good God in the Person of His dear Son, and you shall never perish.

Now, Christians, do you not see the reason why you also sink into this state of heart sometimes? Why, Brothers and Sisters, it is the same with you as it is with sinners—if you do not keep close to the Cross you will soon become unhappy. I know you doubting professors, you who have been singing—

"'Tis a point I long to know,"

you would not sing that if you lived close to the Cross and sung—

"My faith looks up to Thee,
You Lamb of Calvary,
Savior Divine."

And you backsliders, you would never backslide if you lived where the blood continually flows, for that which pardons us sanctifies us. I believe that when you and I begin to think we are fine saints, and forget that we are only just filthy sinners washed in the blood, we begin to backslide. There is nothing like living every day as we lived the first day of our conversion. Does not Paul say, "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk you in Him"? That is, live every day as you lived at first, being nothing in yourself, but Jesus being All in All to you. Away with self, and let Jesus be glorified! We must not have so much as a shadow of dependence upon anything that we can do or feel, or promise, but we must depend alone upon that dear, that blessed Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us!

I feel this morning as if I could come afresh to that dear Cross, and rest there on Christ. I feel as if I could put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, and say, "My Lord and my God!"

Oh, cannot some poor soul do this who never did it before? I pray God he may; and if it is done by you, and you trust in Jesus, then—let Heaven rejoice, let earth be glad, and praise surround the Throne of God, because such a one is saved, for is it not written, "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more"?

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
HEBREWS 8:6-13; 10:1-22.

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"And she said, Truth, Lord: yet even the little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."
Matthew 15:27.

IN this narrative we have the portrait of a soul for which a sure blessing is reserved. If the story closed without its final verse, one might be quite sure as to what the result of the woman's pleading would be. Christ must change His Nature if a person coming as she is said to have come, could be sent away empty. I shall with a few touches sketch the woman's picture, and shall beg you to see if you are like she, for if so it will be evidence to you that the time to favor you, yes, the set time, has come. This woman had *a great and pressing need.* Her daughter was vexed with a devil, and she could not endure to see the misery which that evil spirit caused her child; the pain and anguish, the delirium and horror into which the child was thrown were too much for her to bear. Her need was conscious, troublesome, burdensome; she had grown desperate under it; she *must* be rid of it. Is it so with you, dear Hearer? Does your sin plague you? Does your transgression come up before you like a continual offense? Does it vex you both day and night till it has come to this, that you cannot live without pardon, that you must be forgiven or driven into madness? Do you feel that things are at such a point with you that you cannot live any longer under the sentence of Divine Wrath? This is a very blessed and hopeful sign. If there are many such here, there is music in store for angels.

When her case was come to such a point, *she heard of the Lord Jesus; and what she heard she acted upon.* They told her that He was a great healer of the sick, and able to cast out devils. She was not content with that information, but she set to work at once to try its value. She went to Jesus with all speed—finding that it was a convenient season, for He was near her land, and she hastened to cry unto Him. Ah, dear Hearer, you, too, have heard of Jesus. I shall not ask you whether you know the Doctrine of His Godhead and of His Manhood and of His Atonement for sin—you know it well, but have you put it to the test? You understand that He saves souls; have you taken your own soul to Him to be saved? You know that He can forgive sin, are you looking to Him now to forgive *your* sin? If it is so, though as yet you sit in the shadow of Death, your hour of deliverance hastens on apace; for a soul under a sense of need that honestly seeks the Savior's face is not far from the Kingdom of Heaven.

This woman was most *desperately resolved.* She had made up her mind, I believe, that she would never go back to the place from where she came till she had received the blessing. She would dog the Savior's footsteps, she would waylay Him; if the disciples pushed her back she would wait another opportunity; if not then successful, she would try the

next occasion, and if that would not suffice, she would venture yet again. She was sorely tried by the Savior, for He sometimes tests those whom He knows to be strong enough to bear the trial; and when she obtained no answer from Him, but rather met with a rebuff, she was not daunted but pressed her suit, for she had drunk deep into the spirit of the hymn—

"Resolved, for that's my last defense,
If I must perish there to die."

If there is a soul here who has come to this, that he will never give up praying until he receives a comfortable answer, that he will never cease to weep for sin until the blood has washed it out, rejoice, you heavens, and be glad, O Earth, for there are souls here who have come to the birth, and they shall be brought forth this day; there are souls here who are now upon the edge of liberty, upon the verge of peace; they shall even this day obtain complete freedom from all their bondage. I said at the commencement, that this woman was a correct portrait of the most hopeful case in the world; can you see your own face in her story, even as men see their countenances in a mirror? Then I am happy, for your position is full of hope.

I may not leave this picture, however, without observing that this woman *triumphantly endured a trial very common among seeking souls.* Brothers and Sisters, those Evangelists who are not pastors will perhaps differ from me in what I am about to say, but if they knew more about souls they would not. It is customary in the pulpit to exhort people to believe in Jesus Christ; it is not only customary but it is most proper and right, and the more of it the better; but there are some who are content with giving the exhortation generally, and do not with affectionate discrimination deal with the separate cases of men. There are cases in which the bare exhortation to believe is not enough. I wonder what mere exhorters would do with certain peculiar instances which I have now under my own hand. I have explained the Gospel to them to the best of my ability many times, and have prayed with them and for them; I have given them books which God has blessed in other cases; I have directed them to passages of Scripture which have been the means of giving the Light of God to thousands; yet these persons month after month remain in as much doubt and distress of mind as at first, no, they are even worse. This was my own case for years as a child. The Gospel was taught me by my parents; but I was in such darkness and despondency of spirit that I could not do what I was bid to do, and felt as if when bid to look to Christ I had no eyes to look with. Even the Gospel did not then appear to suit my case; it was my sinful blindness and guilty folly which made me think so; but alas, how many are there equally blinded who need to have their cases handled gently and wisely. Albeit that we say to them, "Believe," they are far from being comforted by the advice; there is needed some further explanation, some simpler opening up of the saving Truth of God, and perhaps a laborious answering of their difficulties, before they can find peace.

Genuine seekers who as yet have not obtained the blessing, may take comfort from the story before us. The Savior did not at once give the blessing, even though this woman had faith. Be not startled; it is the truth. She had real and genuine faith in Christ when she came to Jesus,

else she would never have put up with the rebuffs of the disciples. Yet, believer as she was, she did not at first, obtain the blessing which she sought. The Savior always intended to give it, but He waited awhile. "He answered her not a word." Were not her prayers good? Never better in the world. Was not her case needy? Sorrowfully needy. Did she not *feel* her need sufficiently? She did feel it overwhelmingly. Was she not earnest enough? She was as earnest as ever woman could be. Had she no faith? She had such a high degree of it that even Jesus wondered, and said, "O woman, great is your faith." Yet for a while she could not obtain an answer to her prayers. See then, dear Friends, although it is true that faith brings peace, yet it does not always bring it instantaneously. There may be certain reasons calling for the trial of faith, rather than the reward of faith. Genuine faith may be in the soul like a hidden seed, but as yet it may not have budded and blossomed into joy and peace. Comfort is the child of Faith, but it is not always as old as its mother. I say this to cheer some of you. Do not, I beseech you, give up seeking; do not give up trusting my Master, because you have not yet obtained the conscious joy which you long for. I doubt not but that you certainly will be saved, even though as yet no kindly promise has gladdened your heart. "Slow breaks the light" on many a heart, but surely will it break before long.

A painful silence from the Savior is the grievous trial of many a seeking soul, but heavier still is the affliction of a harsh cutting reply such as this, "It is not good to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." Many in waiting upon the Lord find immediate delight, but this is not the case with all. Some, like the jailer, are in a moment turned from darkness to light, but others are plants of slower growth. A deeper sense of sin may be given to you instead of a sense of pardon, and in such a case you will have need of patience to bear the heavy blow. Ah, poor Heart, though Christ beats and bruises you or even slays you, trust Him; though He should give you an angry word, believe in the love of His heart; and even if for the next few months you should not be able to say, "I know comfortably that He is mine," yet cast yourself on Him, and perseveringly depend even where you cannot rejoicingly hope.

We come to the text itself. The woman's case is an instance of prevailing faith; and if we would conquer, we must imitate her tactics. If I were called to be a commander in an army, I should observe how other commanders who have been successful have managed the matter. Here is a woman who conquered Christ, let us go by her rule, and we will conquer Christ too by His own Divine Grace.

I. In the first place, observe that SHE ADMITS THE ACCUSATION BROUGHT AGAINST HER. Jesus called her a dog, and she meekly said, "Truth, Lord." Here is no controversy with Christ; no setting up of oppositions, excuses, and mitigations. She is frank, prompt, humble, and open. "Truth, Lord"—that is her only answer to Him. When a man wrestles, much depends upon his foothold; if he does not stand firmly he cannot win the day; and if we would wrestle with the Angel of Mercy, we must find a foothold where this woman did, in a deep sense of unworthiness. She knew herself to be an outcast from Israel, and at once confessed it. The most of men if they had been called dogs, would either have turned on their heel and gone away in sullen despair, or else would

have blazed into a bad temper and replied to the Master, "I am no more dog than You, and if I come to ask a charity, can You not at least give me a civil refusal?" The natural heart rebels against what the Scriptures says about it. Until a man is truly humbled he scorns to admit the depravity of his nature; though he may be quite willing to use the common terms of humility, he does not mean them, for if they were applied to him in another shape he would grow very angry; like the monk who said he had broken all the Commandments and was as bad as Judas Iscariot, but when a bystander remarked, "I always thought so," the monk grew dreadfully angry, and vowed vengeance on the man who so insulted him. Call me a horse if you will, but it is quite another thing to put a saddle on my back.

I have heard of a woman who told her minister who visited her that she was a shocking sinner. "Well," said the minister, "I have no doubt you are; Let us go over your sins." So beginning with the First Commandment, she declared that she had never broken that; she had never worshipped any other god but God; as to the Second Commandment, she was sure she had never set up any graven images; nor had she broken the Sabbath; she had honored her father and mother; never coveted, never borne false witness, never killed anybody, and in fact she pleaded that she had not broken one of the Ten Commandments, notwithstanding she had confessed herself so sad a sinner. We plead guilty to stealing a forest, but deny that we ever thieved so much as a couple of sticks. The woman before us believed in her heart the degradation of her state, so that when the Savior addressed her in apparently the coarsest manner as a dog, she was so thoroughly conversant with her own fallen condition that it did not startle her to be called what she knew herself to be. She had heard sin bark within her so often, and so loudly that when the Savior called her a dog, she only felt that He was calling things by their right names. If I were to go over the whole statement of the Fall, and the mischief of sin, everybody in this place would say, "That is true." But oh, how few there are who really feel it to be true, and are deeply grieved over it! We are all sinners, *so we say;* but we all have our excellencies, *so we feel.*

The Word of God does not give us a very complimentary picture of humanity. It informs us that our first father sinned, and that through him, as he stood for all of us, we all fell and lost the favor of God. The Herald's College of Scripture draws up for us a miserable pedigree. Those aristocrats who are so proud of their Norman ancestors would do well to trace the family tree to a still earlier date, and they will find the one of blue blood ending in the gardener who stole his Master's fruit, and was sent adrift without a rag to cover his nakedness. A beggarly pedigree this, you nobles of the Earth; this is a *sinister mark* on your coat of arms which nothing can wipe out. The Inspired Word goes on to tell us that, in consequence of this, we are all born in sin and shaped in iniquity, and that in sin our mothers conceive us; it testifies that we are not only sinners with the hand, but with the heart; that sin is not merely a scab upon the skin, but a leprosy in the soul; that "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." It tells us that the heart, itself, is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." No, it goes further, and certifies that we are not simply sick and depraved, but utterly perverted;

that through our sin our wills have become perverse so that we will not come to Christ that we might have life, habitually putting the bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, choosing the evil and shunning the good. It tells us that this inability of ours to goodness is so great as to be tantamount to spiritual death. It describes us as being by nature "dead in trespasses and sins," in such a state that we can no more restore ourselves to salvation than the dead in their graves can raise themselves by their own power, and put themselves into a state of life and health. The Book of God says all against man that can be said, and more than man is willing to confess except when the Spirit of God comes, and then our heart answers, "Truth, Lord."

Moreover, God's Word goes on to say that our sin is so great that it must always be hateful to God, that it deserves that we, who have committed it, should be banished from His Presence into unutterable woe; but human nature kicks at this, and says, "No, sin is a weakness, a mistake, and nothing more." But when the Holy Spirit enters the heart we cry, "Truth, Lord; it is a black thing, a devilish thing, an infernal thing, and if You cast us into Hell, You only do with sin what ought to be done with it!"

Beloved Friends, whenever you meet with a sinner bowed down with the burden of sin, never try to make his sin appear to be lighter; on the contrary, say to the soul that is most despairing, "You feel that you are a great sinner, but you are a much greater sinner than you feel yourself to be." When the soul cries, "My sin is very heavy," do not attempt to comfort it by making excuses for it; but, on the contrary, say, "Heavy as you think your sin to be, it is much heavier than you know." Never play into the devil's hands by excusing sinners in their sins. If you give comfort to your friend by saying to him, "Well, you have not been such a sinner as you think you are," you are giving him ruinous comfort; you are presenting to him a poisonous drug which may lull him to sleep, and which will therefore lull him to destruction. Tell him that sin is in itself so horrible that if a man could see a naked sin it would drive him mad, that the very least offense against God is so intolerable, that if Hell fire were put out, one sin could kindle it again. The woman in this case, if it had been a sound way of getting comfort, would have argued, "No, Lord, I am not a dog; I may not be all I ought to be, but I am not a dog at any rate; I am a human being. You speak too sharply; Good Master, do not be unjust." Instead of that she admits the whole. This showed that she was in a right state of mind, since she admitted in its blackest, heaviest meaning whatever the Savior might choose to say against her. By night the glow-worm is bright like a star, but by the light of day the glowworm is a miserable insect, and nothing more.

So with us; until the Light of God comes into us we count ourselves good, but when Heaven's Light shines, our heart is discovered to be rottenness, corruption, and decay. Do not whisper in the mourner's ear that it is not so, and do not delude yourself into the belief that it is not so. You *are* a lost sinner; you deserve damnation; *you* deserve it especially, even if no one else deserves it; you have sinned against Light and against knowledge; you are ruined, and ruined utterly. Bad as you think yourself to be, your case is infinitely worse than you conceive it to be, and I am not here to give you any comfort by saying peace, peace,

where there is no peace. Your state, O Sinner, is horribly bad, and will soon be worse, hopelessly worse; and before God may you be made to feel this, and to say, "Truth, Lord."

II. But notice, in the second place, SHE ADHERES TO CHRIST NOTWITHSTANDING. Did you notice the force of what she said? "Truth, Lord; yet the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from"—where? *"From their master's table."* Dogs in the East very seldom have a master. There are big dogs about every Eastern city that live on the garbage thrown from the houses, and these big dogs are such a nuisance that I am not aware that there is one word in the whole of Scripture in favor of them. The dog, as we know him, is a most affectionate, faithful servant of man, and deserves great honor; but the dog, as he is in the East, deserves nothing but contempt; he is simply a big howling brute, that will bark at or bite anybody who is passing. In the Savior's days the Easterners had learned Roman manners, and had introduced little household dogs; and it is remarkable that our Lord did not call this woman one of the big dogs without a master, but one of the little lap dogs. It was a name of contempt certainly, but still not the severest form of it. "It is not meet to give the children's bread to these little dogs."

There is a word here which I want you to notice. The woman does not say, "the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table," but "from their *master's* table." Notice her adherence to Jesus, she says in effect to Him, "You are my Master." She seems to say, "Lord, I am asking for a great blessing, and say what You will to me, I mean to have it; but if I cannot obtain the blessing, at any rate, I will always follow *You;* You shall be my Master. If You shall never say, 'go in peace, your faith has given you the blessing,' yet I take You to be my Master." As a stray dog picks up with a stranger and follows him home, and seems to say, "you may kick me or shut the door, but I have taken you to be my master; if you shut me out of one door I will go in at the other; if you shut me out at both doors I will be on the doormat; and if you kick me into the street, I will stand there until you come out, and then I will follow you; I have taken you to be my master, and my master you shall be."

Now, poor Soul, is this your case? If not, I urge you to take that stand. You have admitted that all which Jesus has said is true, but you say, "For all that, whether I am a dog or a devil, I will never leave off coming to Christ as my Savior. If I am a dog I will follow at the heels of Mercy; morning, noon, and night I will crouch at my Master's feet, and I will never give up trusting in Jesus, even if I have no comfort from Him. I have argued out the case with my own heart, and I have concluded that if God becomes a Savior, there can be no case beyond His Infinite Power; if the Son of God dies and sheds His blood there can be no scarlet sin which His blood cannot wash out, and if He rose again and is gone up on high, then He is able to save unto the uttermost them who come unto God by Him. I am resolved therefore, to wait and wrestle until He deigns to give me an answer." No man clings more closely to Christ than he who is most sensible of his lost estate. Who holds the plank the tightest? Why the man who is the most afraid of being drowned. Fear frequently intensifies faith. The more afraid I am of my sins the more firmly do I grasp my Savior. Fear is sometimes the mother of faith. One who was walking in the fields was surprised to find a trembling lark fly into his

bosom. A strange thing for a timid bird to do, was it not? But there was a hawk after it, and therefore fear of the hawk made the bird bold enough to fly to man for shelter. And oh, when the fierce vultures of sin and Hell are pursuing a poor sinner, he is driven by the courage of despair to fly into the heart of the blessed Jesus! John Bunyan has said, somewhere, words to this effect, "I was brought into such a dread and horror under the Wrath of God that I could not help trusting in Christ; I felt that if He stood there with a drawn sword in His hand I must even run right upon its point sooner than endure my sins." I hope and pray that the Lord may drive you to Jesus in such a way as this if you will not be drawn by gentler means.

Brothers and Sisters, a soul set upon Jesus, and clinging to Him with a death grip, can by no means perish; the thing is utterly impossible. I have sometimes tried to picture a soul in Hell that has sought Jesus, and resolved to die at the foot of His Cross. Such a thing cannot be; but suppose it for a moment, and the supposition will destroy itself. "Alas," says that lost soul, "Jesus, I did hang alone upon You, but I am undone; I was worthless, I deserved nothing of Your favor; but I did trust in You as the Savior of the vile. I did depend upon Your Power to deliver me, and here I am in the pit of Hell." Can you fancy such a sound as that amid the wailings of Hell? How the devils would laugh! "Ha, ha! Where are the promises? Where is the great heart of Christ to let a sinner perish who twined his arms about Him? Was it because *He could not?"* Then Satan cries, "Ha, ha! He was not able to save to the uttermost them who came to God by Him, though He claimed to be a physician He could not heal." "Or else," says the arch-fiend, "He *would not* save those who longed and panted to be saved." You shudder to think what fearful blasphemy all this would be, and how it would tarnish the honor of the glorious Redeemer! It shall not be; Sinner, it shall not be. If you are the filthiest offender who ever lived, cast yourself at the feet of Jesus, resolved never to leave until He gives you pardon. He cannot refuse you. We must not limit God, and say what He can or cannot do; but we do read that He cannot lie, and certainly if Jesus were to cast out a soul that came to Him, He would lie. Therefore be of good cheer. Only stand to it that you will never leave the Savior, that you will die at the foot of the Cross, and all shall be well with you.

III. Furthermore, the woman's great master weapon which she used in her battle, was this, SHE HAD LEARNED THE ART OF GETTING COMFORT OUT OF HER MISERIES.

Jesus called her a dog. "Yes," she said, "but then dogs get the crumbs." She could see a silver lining to the black cloud. Christ threw a bone at her; she took it up and cracked it, and got marrow out of it. It looked to be a very hard stone, but it had a lump of gold inside, and she knocked away the quartz and found the clear bright bullion and was enriched. "Call me a dog," she says, "very well, I will be a dog, and I shall get the crumbs." She draws water of comfort from the deep well of her miseries. Now, poor Soul in the same state, try by the Holy Spirit's aid to do the same thing. Satan has been saying to you, "You have broken God's Law, you have offended Him, you have been *a sinner."* Soul, if you have any wit left, cut the devil's head off with his own sword; say to him, "I am a sinner, but it is written, 'It is a faithful saying and worthy of all

acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' What do you say to that, Satan? If I am a sinner He came into the world to save sinners. If I had not been a sinner Jesus would not have come to save me, for it is nowhere written that He came to save those who are not sinners."

The more clearly I prove that I am a sinner, the more clearly I prove that I am an object for the Savior's Mercy. Perhaps Conscience whispers, "You are not a sinner of an ordinary kind; you have gone to the greatest lengths until you have made your heart hard; you are *a lost sinner."* "Ah!" you say, "I will catch at that then, for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. He did not come to seek those who did not need seeking; He did not come as the Great Shepherd to find the sheep that were in the fold, but those which had gone astray; and I being a lost one, when I see the Shepherd going over the mountains after the lost ones, I will bleat like a lost sheep, for perhaps He has come to look after me." But Conscience says to you, again, "You are such an *undeserving* one; you are not only a lost sinner, but you are utterly unworthy." Sinner, catch at that and say, "God is a God of Mercy. If I deserved anything there would be the less room for mercy; for something would be due to me as a matter of Justice; but as I am a sheer mass of putrid sin, there is room for the Lord to reveal the magnitude of His Grace."

There is no room for a man to be generous among yonder splendid mansions in Belgravia. Suppose a man had thousands of pounds in his pocket, and desired to give it away in charity, he would be terribly hampered by princely palaces. If he were to knock at the doors of those great houses, and say he wanted an opportunity of being charitable, powdered footmen would slam the door in his face, and tell him to be gone with his impudence. But come along with me; let us wander down the Mews all among the dunghills, and get away into back alleys where crowds of ragged children are playing amid filth and squalor, where all the people are miserably poor, and where cholera is festering. Now Sir, down with your money bags; here is plenty of room for your charity; now you may put both your hands into your pockets, and not fear that anybody will refuse you. You may spend your money right and left now with ease and satisfaction. When the God of Mercy comes down to distribute Mercy, He cannot give it to those who do not need it; but you need forgiveness, for you are full of sin, and you are just the person likely to receive it. "Ah!" says one, "I am so *sick at heart;* I cannot believe, I cannot pray." If I saw the doctor's carriage driving along at a great rate through the streets, I would be sure that he was not coming to my house, for I do not require him; but if I had to guess where he was going, I would conclude that he was hastening to some sick or dying person. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Physician of souls. The more sick you are, the more room there is for the Physician's art. When a man sets up in a trade, he likes to find a locality where his articles are needed, and there he opens his shop.

What if I say it is my Master's trade to save sinners? What if I say it is the only business and calling that He undertook, to become a Savior of lost and ruined souls? Then He can drive a brisk trade in your heart, and I believe that He will open shop there, and enrich Himself with your

praise and your love by saving you. Do try now, my Hearer, thus to find hope in the very hopelessness of your condition, in whatever aspect that hopelessness may appear to you. The Bible says that you are *dead in sin;* then conclude that there is space for Jesus to come, since He is the Resurrection and the Life. If you were alive, you would not need two lives; but as you are dead, there is room for Jesus to give you Life. The Bible tells you that you are empty; do not deny it; say, "Truth, Lord," but then there is room for Christ's fullness. If you were full you could not hold two fullnesses; your own fullness would keep Christ's fullness out; but now that you are empty there is room for Him. Dear Heart, instead of trying to make your case out to be better, believe in its thorough badness, and yet be of good cheer. You can not exaggerate your sin, and even if you could it were wiser to err in that direction than the other.

A man called at my house some time ago for charity; a thorough beggar, I have no doubt. Thinking that the man's rags and poverty were real, I gave him a little money, some of my clothes, and a pair of shoes. After he had put them on and gone out, I thought, "Well, after all, I have done you a bad turn very likely, for you will not get as much money now as before, because you will not look so wretched an object." Happening to go out a quarter of an hour afterwards, I saw my friend, but he was not wearing the clothes I had given him, not he; why, I would have ruined his business if I could have compelled him to look respectable. He had been wise enough to slip down an archway, take all the good clothes off, and put his rags on again. Did I blame him? Yes, for being a rogue, but not for carrying on his business in a business-like manner. He only wore his proper clothes, for rags are the clothes of a beggar. The more ragged he looked the more he would get. Just so is it with you. If you are to go to Christ, do not put on your good doings and feelings, or you will get nothing; go in your sins, they are your clothes. Your ruin is your argument for mercy; your poverty is your plea for heavenly alms; and your need is the motive for heavenly goodness. Go as you are, and let your miseries plead for you.

If I were wounded on the battle-field, and the surgeon was going about to attend the sick, he would be sure to visit those first whose wounds were the worst; for in the hurry of a battle they do not look after a man who has had his finger shot off when there are others whose arms and legs are gone. I would take care to state my case as fully as I could; by no means speaking lightly of my hurts, in order to have my bleeding wounds bound up as soon as possible. I should not feel inclined to say, "Oh, it is nothing, I am very little injured; it is no problem." I should be for taking time by the forelock, and getting what help I needed as soon as possible. Now, you too, Sinner, learn this art. Do not paint yourself in bright colors, but admit yourself to be lost and ruined, and then, adhering still to Christ, make your very wants, and needs, and death, and ruin to be an argument why the Lord of Mercy should show His mighty Power in you.

IV. Let me, in the fourth place, notice the way in which the woman gained comfort—SHE THOUGHT GREAT THOUGHTS OF CHRIST.

I must have your attention in this. The Master had talked about the children's bread. "Now," she argued, "since You are the Master of that table, I know that You are a generous housekeeper, and there is sure to

be abundance of bread on Your table. You are no stingy provider, there will be such an abundance for the children that there will be crumbs to throw on the floor for the dogs, and the children will fare none the worse because the dogs are fed." She did not think the Lord Jesus to be a workhouse master who must serve out so many ounces of bread for each one, but she thought Him to be a generous provider who kept so good a table that all that she needed would only be a crumb in comparison; yet remember, what she needed was to have the devil cast out of her daughter. It was a very great thing to her, but she had such a high esteem of Christ that she said, "It is nothing to Him—it is but a crumb for Christ to give." This is the royal road to comfort. Great thoughts of your sin alone will drive you to despair; but great thoughts of Christ will soon bear you upwards upon eagle's wings. "My sins are many, but oh, it is nothing to Jesus to take them all away; He can as easily lift the mountains of my sin as I could lift a molehill on a shovel. It is true the weight of my guilt presses me down as a giant's foot would crush a worm, but it would be no more than a grain of dust to Him, because He has already borne its curse in His own body on the Cross. It will be but a small thing *for Him* to give me full remission, although it will be an infinite blessing *for me* to receive it." She opens her mouth to expect great things of Jesus, and He fills it with His love.

I ask you, dear Friends, to do the same. Oh may the Holy Spirit enable you! But you may say, "help me." Well, I will help you. You ought to think great thoughts of Jesus when you remember that *He is God.* What limit can you set when you have God to deal with? He with His span measures the heavens, in the hollow of His hands He holds the seas, He takes up the isles as a very little thing. If Jesus Christ is God, how can you think He cannot save you? O Man, when you have to deal with the Eternal and Infinite let your doubts fly to the winds. Think again that He being God, *suffered the penalty of sin;* a grief which man alone could not have endured. The weight of His Father's Wrath fell upon Jesus at Calvary. Can you see Him with His pierced hands and feet? Can you read the lines of agony written upon His crown of thorns, and not believe that He is able to save? God Over All, the Glory of whose Countenance fills Heaven with splendor, yields His face to be covered with shameful spit, and His brow to be wet with drops of bloody sweat. Is anything impossible to the merits of the agonizing God? Think of that, Sinner, and you will put no limit to what Jesus can do. But Jesus *rose again.* See Him as He rises from the tomb, ascending to His Father's Throne amid the jubilations of ten thousand angels; see how He wears the keys of Heaven, and Death and Hell, swinging at His waist! What cannot He do? Not save you? He who is "exalted on high to give repentance," who is, "able to save to the uttermost," seeing that He ever lives to intercede—can you doubt His power to save? Oh, do not dishonor my Master. Trust Him now!

But you are still doubting. Then I will bring you one thing more that shall, by God's sweet Love, drive your doubts away and make you cling to the Savior. There are some country towns in the eastern counties where there is a celebrated doctor, and I have heard of wagons starting from remote hamlets loaded with people to go 20 or 30 miles to consult the famous man; whether he does them good or not I am sure I cannot tell,

but the illustration serves my purpose. Suppose one of you were to set off to see this doctor. Feeling very sick and ill, you are afraid that he will be of no service to you when you get there; but on the road you meet wagonloads of persons journeying cheerfully home. They ask, "Where are you going?" and you reply, "I am going off to Doctor So-and-So, for I am ill." "Oh!" they say, "you are very blest to be able to go; we have been there; we were all as bad as you and we have been cured, and are now going home." "But," you say, "had any of you a bad leg like mine?" "Oh, yes," one replies, "I had two bad legs, my case was even worse than yours." "Well, were you perfectly restored?" "Yes," says the man. "See how I can walk, I am fully restored." Would you not go on with confidence? You were half afraid before, but you say, "Now I shall proceed joyfully, for these cures are so many proofs of the physician's power."

There are hundreds this morning even in this free Tabernacle, who can say, "Yes, Jesus is able to save," and they can give the very best proof of it, too, by adding, "He saved me!" Dear Hearers, I know that Christ can save sinners, for I have seen His Salvation in thousands of cases; but the best proof I ever had was when He saved me. When I looked to Him and was lightened, and my face was not ashamed, then I knew, I needed no further arguments. O Sinner, He has saved drunks, swearers, harlots, whoremongers, adulterers. Paul says that He saved those who defiled themselves with nameless sins, for he says, "Such were some of you; but you are washed." Even the murderer can have deeds of blood washed out by the blood of Jesus. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," for "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from all sin." He is a great Savior! He is the greatest Savior! He is a Savior greater than the greatest; and as for *your* sins, they shall sink beneath the sea of His atoning blood, and shall be found against you no more forever! The woman thought great thoughts of Christ, and that brought her comfort.

V. And so you see, in the last place, SHE WON THE VICTORY.

She confessed what Christ laid at her door; she laid fast hold upon Him and drew arguments even out of His hard words; she believed great things of Him, and she thus overcame Him. Now let me say that the reason why she overcame Christ was really here, that she had first of all overcome herself. She had conquered in another fight before she wrestled with the Savior, that was with her own soul. I think I see her before she started away from home. She was sitting down one day when a talkative neighbor came in, and said, "Have you heard about the new Prophet?" "No, I have not; what about Him?" "Oh! He is a great Healer of diseases." "Tell me all about it," said the woman, for that subject interested her. She heard the story; she knew that her friend talked a great deal more than she needed, and she did not quite believe it. The next day she called at the house, and said, "Are you certain that what you told me was quite true?" "Well," she said, "I heard it from So-and-So, whose daughter was healed." The woman then determined to hunt the matter out, and at last found an eyewitness whose word could be taken. "Yes," said the friend, "it is the Messiah, the Son of God, who has come down to earth, and I am sure He is able to cure, for I have seen some wonderful miracles worked by Him; there can be no doubt about His power." At first the

woman was puzzled. She had been brought up as a heathen; she had tried her heathen gods, and they had failed her; she had tried her priests, and they had only deluded her, and she thought that this perhaps was a delusion, too. But she thought it over.

There were 50 objections, but then she said, "I have heard that there will be such-and-such marks attending the coming of the Messiah, and this Man is just what they said the Messiah would be; I believe He is the Messiah, and if He is God's Son, He must be able to heal my daughter." Then hosts of difficulties came up. "You are a Canaanite." "Yes, but it was said of the Messiah, 'A bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench,' therefore, I will go and try Him; and again it is written, 'In Him shall the Gentiles trust,' I am a Gentile, and I will trust in Him." I can suppose that she debated all this over in her mind, and having first conquered herself she easily overcame the willing Savior.

Possibly some of you may suppose that there is a degree of difficulty in bringing the Lord Jesus to save a sinner. There is none whatever. The difficulty is in bringing the sinner to trust Jesus. This is the work, this is the labor. In this woman's case the conflict with Jesus was only external but not real. He was already on her side. The true conflict was with her own unbelief, and when her faith had proved itself victorious within, it became victorious with Christ. Sinner, there is nothing between you and Salvation but yourself. Do I speak boldly? Christ has leveled every mountain that stands in your way, He has filled up every valley, and He has made a high road from you to the very Throne of God. The difficulty is with you, not with God. How then is it with you? Can you trust Christ, dear Hearer? Can you throw yourself wholly upon Jesus Crucified? If so, your sins are forgiven you, go your way and rejoice. But if you cannot, here is your difficulty. Oh, may God help you to contend with it. It is a sin to doubt Christ; it is a cruelty; it is an unkind cut to suspect that He is unwilling to forgive. Cast away, I pray you, your wicked unbelief! May God the Holy Spirit help you to do so! Come just as you are, and rest in Jesus, and you shall find Eternal Life.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
MATTHEW 15:21-39.

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"Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleeps, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.'" Ephesians 5:14.

WE have not time this evening to enter into the question as to where this quotation came from. There does not appear to be one exactly like it in the compass of the Old Testament; but we must remember that the Apostle very frequently quotes the spirit of texts rather than the words of them. In the 8th and in the 10th Chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews we find him quoting the same passage, but not in the same words, showing us that he, as an Inspired man, felt himself able to deal rather with the spirit of a passage than with the precise words of it. There may, therefore, be no such passage in the Old Testament verbally, but as there are several which have the spirit of the exhortation, Paul was justified in saying, "God has said so-and-so."

Besides, the passage may not be a quotation at all. The Apostle may mean to say that Christ said that to him, or that Christ said that by him; that Christ intended even then, while he was handling the pen and writing, to say the words which he then wrote—"He said so-and-so."

We have no time, however, to go into that matter. It is a more important question, perhaps—To whom is this text addressed? Nine times out of 10 when it is preached, it is taken as though it were addressed to the ungodly. It is a very proper text to address to the ungodly, but I do not see that the context permits it. There are some who would think it altogether unscriptural and unsound to address these words to those who have no spiritual life. We are not of their number. If we see a man ever so deadly asleep we believe we are commissioned by God to preach the Gospel to him, and to say, "Awake, you who sleep," and though more and more persuaded of the need of moral sensibility in man and the desperate character of his depravity, we are not among those who fear to preach to dead sinners, but dare to say, even to the dead, "Thus says the Lord, You dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord, You dry bones, live!" We can, therefore, very well take this text and address it to the ungodly. But this is not intended to be a sermon to the unconverted. It appears to me to have been addressed to the Church of God at Ephesus, to have been the language of Paul to God's own people, warning them not to fall into the same habits as did the children of darkness, but to come out and show themselves to be God's people.

I know the objection will be raised that they are told to come forth from the dead; but I do not see that that is any obstacle at all, for albeit

that the people of God may not be spiritually dead in the sense in which the ungodly are, yet how often do we speak of ourselves as feeling as if we were dead, and speak of our Graces and of our piety as though they were come into a cold and dead state? It is comparative death that the Apostle here means, and we may use the words employed here as we would use them in common conversation, and say that though there are some quivers of spiritual life in the breast of every Believer, yet there are multitudes who are outwardly dead as to their usefulness, and there are Christians and Churches too of whom we may say, without at all libeling them, "You are dead; awake you who sleep."

Whatever objection there may be to addressing the text to the converted, there will be far more difficulty in addressing it to the unconverted, and I think there ought to be no hesitation in directing it to either. To raise difficulties is very easy, but meekly to try to learn what the Savior would say is far better.

I intend tonight, then, to use the text to you Christians, you Church members, you professors, and the first thing we shall discuss is *the state of mind into which many Christians get;* secondly, *what Christ has to say to them about this state,* namely, "Awake, and arise from the dead." And then, thirdly, *the gracious promise with which we are encouraged to make the effort.* "Christ *will* give you light."

I. First, then, let us notice THE STATE OF MIND INTO WHICH A CHRISTIAN MAY SOMETIMES GET.

The state of mind into which a genuine Christian may fall, and, if a genuine Christian, much more a spurious one—he may be asleep, and, in a modified sense, even dead.

Let me begin describing this state of mind by mentioning *the insidious character of it.*

A Christian may be asleep and not know it. Indeed, if he did know it he would not be asleep. It is a part of sleep for men to be in an unconscious state, and when a Christian begins to slumber perhaps he dreams that he is rich and increased in goods; but he is not at all likely to take up a lamentation to himself, and say, "I am asleep," for if a man could say, "I am asleep," I think it would be pretty tolerable evidence that he was awake, and the fear of being asleep, the very dread of being asleep, would be proof, at any rate, of some degree of wakefulness. Often, very often, when young people come to me and say, "Oh, Sir, I am afraid I am a hypocrite," my answer generally is, "Then I am not afraid of it, for when you are afraid of such a sin as that it is not at all likely that you are guilty of it." Some of you, then, tonight, may be in a very sleepy state, but for this very reason you will not think so.

And, Brothers and Sisters, *a Christian who is asleep may be kept in very good countenance by his neighbors.* His fellow Christians may not be likely to accuse him of it, for probably they are in the same state, and if you put a number of sleeping people together they are not likely to be very active in rebuking one another, so that this state of mind is very dangerous and very insidious. A man may be in a Church where nearly all the members are asleep, and they may say that the other Churches in

the neighborhood are fanatical, enthusiastic, and a great deal too earnest, and thus all these people are sleeping to the same tune, and comforting one another in it. Oh, then, may God help them, for they are in a very perilous state!

A person, too, who is asleep, *may have taken care, before he went to sleep to prevent anybody coming in to wake him.* There is a way of bolting the door of your heart against anybody. If you get into certain views of Doctrine you can very easily go to sleep, and your Doctrines will stand as sentinels at the doors to prevent anybody from awakening you. Beware of Antinomianism! [The doctrine or belief that the Gospel frees Christians from required obedience to any law, whether scriptural, civil, or moral, and that salvation is attained solely through faith and the gift of divine grace.[1]] If you once drink a draught of that it will send you into such a sleep as you may never awaken. If you fall into certain hyper-Calvinistic views you will have a reply ready to the rebuke of the most earnest of God's servants. You will begin to judge them instead of judging yourselves, and accuse them of being unorthodox while you believe yourselves to be sound, and so you are, but only in the sense of being sound asleep.

This sleepiness in the Christian is exceedingly dangerous, too, *because he can do a great deal while he is asleep that will make him look as if he were quite awake.* For instance, some people *talk* in their sleep, and many professors will talk just as if they were the most active, the most earnest, the most gracious, the most warm-hearted people anywhere. I say to you what I mean when I declare that I have heard people in this very house *pray* in their sleep. I do not mean in their natural sleep, but in their spiritual sleep. I could tell by the droning way in which they prayed, and by their repeating some phrases that I had heard them use before, that they were not awake to the duty, that they were not really praying, throwing their souls into it, but praying because they were asked to do so, and so just went through the motions, their souls being asleep all the time. And many a man has sung a hymn in this house asleep too. His heart has never been awakened to the true melody of praise, yet he has got through the hymn somehow, his lips making a sound, but his heart never singing at all, he himself awake enough to catch the notes, but his heart not awake enough to drink into the true spirit of thanksgiving. So, you see, it is hard for a man to know he is in this state, since he can talk when asleep even as others do.

What is more amazing, some people can *walk* in their sleep, yes, and walk in dangerous places where waking men would be unsafe. They by some strange influence seem to walk steadily and calmly along the eddies and turn by the dangers beneath; even the howling of winds abroad seems to be inoperative upon their senses; and they therefore have a kind of security which more wakefulness would remove from them. And, oh, the fatal security of some professors, and the way in which they will dally with the world, and yet keep up an outwardly consistent character. Oh, the manner in which some Christians will go as near to the fire of sin

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as well may be, and be scorched by it and yet not burned! Oh, some of you are good, excellent, moral people in the judgment of men, but nevertheless, as Christians you do not seem to be awake to the interest of Christ's Kingdom. And as a man can thus talk in his sleep, and walk in his sleep, there is another thing he can do better than other people, namely, *dream* in his sleep. He is the man to concoct plans, and discover new inventions. He can sketch out methods for building chapels, oh, so rapidly; he can find ways of bringing out ministers, and doing all sorts of things, and yet he is asleep all the while. The waking man does it, and proves that he is awake by doing it, but the slumbering man only calculates—so many pence a week, so many subscriptions, and the thing will be done; but there is never a brick to show for all his dreams! He dreams deliciously, but as for activity, it is not there. He could always manage a Sunday school, or build a Christian interest better than anybody else, but no Sunday school or Christian interest ever springs up under his hand, because the man's whole activity shows itself in inventions which are never executed, and in plans which are never carried out. I say, then, that it becomes very dangerous, because sometimes these dreaming people do dream good things, and they get carried out by some practical person, while they themselves are asleep all the while. As we have often seen a sleeping driver with his horses going on with their load, so they can make others work while they themselves sleep.

And the worst of it is that when these sleeping people get into a nice comfortable position in the Christian Church they can fill it very well, and they are the last people in the world to get out, because, sleepy as they are, they know when the bed is soft and warm. And oh, when sleeping ministers get into the pulpit, what a curse they are to us! And when sleepy church officers once get into their places there is no moving them, but here they are, and they seem to fill the place quite well, while all the while it is as though the sentinel's box were filled with a slumbering man, and consequently the army is not guarded, and an attack may be made all of a sudden. Oh, Sirs, I fear that half of Christian people nowadays are in this sleepy state, and yet if they were told so to their face, they would be very angry with the men who had the honesty to tell the truth. Perhaps some here are not awake, and if so they will be the ones offended, and I shall therefore be like Swift, who said, "No doubt this is a capital sermon in Church to those who are awake; but it is of no use to those who have been asleep while I have been preaching it." It is just that. The Brother to whom this applies most will be just the person to fold his arms and say, "We are well, and let us leave well enough alone." It is insidious in the last degree.

I have thus endeavored to show the deceptive character of this evil.

But, in the next place, *what is the evil, itself?* I do not know that I can describe it; but perhaps you have felt it, and certainly you must have seen it. It is an *unconsciousness of one's own state,* and a carelessness of such a kind as not to want to be conscious of it. The man takes everything for granted in religion. Whether he is a Christian or not, does

not awaken in him any questions. He believes he is, thinks he is, and that is enough for him. He does not want to come to close dealings. He does not like the preacher who makes him try the foundations; he would rather not have such unpleasant points put to him. He says, like the man who sleeps on the mast, "A little more rest, and I will awake." I fear that many of us get into such a state as this. Then he also becomes indifferent to the state of other men. The man who is asleep does not care what becomes of his neighbors; how can he while he is asleep? And oh, some of you Christians do not care whether souls are saved or damned. It little concerns some Christians what becomes of St. Giles, or Bethnal Green, or Golden Lane. It is enough for them if they are comfortable. If they can attend a respectable place of worship and go with others to Heaven, they are indifferent about everything else. And whether there shall be an increase of darkness or of the Light of God in England does not seem to concern some Christians, nor, even some ministers!

I know some very good and eminent professors in their way, who seem to me, at least in my poor judgment, as if it did not matter to them whether half of England went to Hell, or whether all went to Heaven. No doubt they would be very pleased if the thing did happen that many were saved, but as to waking themselves up to the value of souls, and to engage in earnest effort and humble prayer, they are too much asleep for that, and are insensible to the state of others. And they seem, too, to be *perfectly immoveable by all appeals.* The best argument is lost on a sleeping man. You might convince him if he were awake, but what can you do with him while he still slumbers? Therefore it is, that many a Christian enterprise has no assistance from professed Believers, because and only because they are asleep. They might help it; they ought to help it; but they do not help it; they profess to be the servants of Jesus Christ, but they do not serve Him, because they are indifferent, and because they are much given to slumber. And then this slumbering spirit *spreads itself* over everything else. The sleeping Christian does not enjoy the Word. If he reads it the text seems meaningless. If he hears it he thinks the preacher does not preach as he used to do. If he goes to sing with others, he throws no heart into it. If he joins in the Prayer Meeting he goes in and out, but he does not wrestle with the Angel of Mercy. As to his own closet, it is full of cobwebs. As to his own heart, he has not had an inspection of it for many a day, because the man is got into a slumbering state. You can often detect Churches slumbering by the way in which they drawl out the hymns, and their protracted prayers, which, after all, are no prayers at all. There is a heartlessness in the manner in which everything is done. Then these Brethren get unhappy, and afterwards they get to be quarrelsome. Do not let that be the case with any of us here!

Then there are some who get their Christianity into such a state that they are so nearly dead that they are always looking after evidences. We get into a low and miserable state because we are in a sleepy state. Where this continues long, a Christian Church comes to be a positive

nuisance. These are strong words to use of any Church, but it is so. I know villages where it would be easy to establish a Baptist church if it were not unhappily the case that there is one already there which does no good, and which prevents anybody else from doing anything. A pulpit may sometimes be the emblem of a curse. It may stand there. the Chapel may stand there, and earnest ministers in the neighborhood may say, "We cannot go there because good Brother So-and-So is there," and good Brother So-and-So may simply be a naughty one who occupies the place without bringing any return to his Master.

You ask me how I can describe this state so well. I answer, because I have been in it myself, and have to mourn that I cannot thoroughly wake myself up even now; and oh, I am quite sure there are some of you who might well join with me in that mourning. Brothers and Sisters, let us think of that word, ETERNITY, and how is it that we do not feel its power more? Think of the Judgment; think of the terrors of that tremendous day when Christ shall appear upon the Great White Throne. Remember the Wrath of God. Remember the pit of Hell which He has dug. Think of the Glory of Christ, of the robes of whiteness, and the tearless eyes of the blood-washed. Can we think of these things, and yet be cold, callous, and indifferent? Shall we always be at this poor dying rate? May God grant that these weighty themes may have such an effect upon us as they must have if we are awake, and no longer seem to be indifferent matters because we ourselves are so nearly asleep, so nearly dead.

Now, two or three words upon what makes this evil of Christians being asleep a great deal worse. It is this—*they are Christ's servants and they ought not to be asleep.* If an employee is set to do a certain duty, you do not continue him in your service if he drops off asleep. Remember the virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom. It was not wrong for them to be asleep at midnight; it was the proper time for sleep; but it was wrong for them to sleep seeing that the bridegroom was come, and that they had gone out to meet him. It was wrong for them to sleep, and as I thought this matter over I thought that you, and I, and every Christian who is asleep, we are very much like the Apostles at the gate of Gethsemane. There was their Master sweating great drops of blood in awful agonizing prayer, but where were they? Helping Him? Casting their prayers into the treasury? Oh, no; not they! Watching against His adversaries and guarding Him against surprise? No, not they. There is the bold Peter who said he never would forsake his Master, but his head is on his bosom. There is John, who has sincere affection for his Lord, but his eyes are fast closed; and James, also, is fast locked in the arms of Sleep. And it is very much the same with us. Christ is up yonder interceding, and we are down here sleeping, the most of us. Christ is up there showing His wounds, and pleading before the Father's Throne that He would visit the sons of men, and give Him to see of the travail of His soul, and here are we, not watching against His enemies, nor helping Him by our prayers; but we are busy here and there wasting precious time, while immortal souls are being lost. We are sleeping like men in the midst of harvest when the grain is waiting for the sickle. Our sickles are

laid by, and we stretch ourselves beneath the shadow of some spreading tree and sleep; though black clouds are gathering, and the rain which will spoil the corn is certainly coming on, we, hired to do the day's work, still sleep on. It is not so with you all, but it is so with many of us.

It is so bad for us to be asleep, too, because *it is quite certain that the enemy is awake.* You remember old Hugh Latimer's sermon in which he says that the devil is the busiest bishop in the kingdom? "Other bishops," he said, "may not visit their dioceses, but he does; he is always at it, day and night." There is no waste of time with Satan! If we could send the devil to sleep we might take a nap ourselves, but we never can, and therefore we ought to be awake. Christian, while you are sleeping, remember time is running on. If you could stop the hands of time you might afford yourselves a little leisure; if you could, as we say, take Time by the forelock, you might pause awhile; but you must not rest, for the tremendous wheels of the chariot of Time are driven at such a fearful rate that the axles are red-hot with speed, and there is no pause in that tremendous rush. On, on, on it goes, and a century has fled like a watch in the night. Time stops not; how can you loiter, Christians? And, meanwhile, souls are being lost. Have you ever seen some of those marvelous pictures which illustrate Dante's "Inferno"? You may have seen one picture in which the artist represents souls as being driven about by wandering winds. I would change the picture, and represent souls going along as in a mighty river; millions of them passing by the banks of Time every hour, many of them snatched out of the current by angelic hands, and landed safely upon the shore; but oh, how many of them go onward to an awful waterfall, a cataract of souls plunging over into eternal woe! As men stand to listen to the roar of Niagara, and to see the flowing foam generated, so I would ask you to look at the waterfall of Death, and to see the multitudes of souls passing down it; a million a month in China alone, and how many millions in other parts of the world are passing into Eternity, unforgiven, unwashed in the Savior's blood?

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, and yet we sit down and sleep! God forgive us! God forgive us! I think that the very devil, if he were saved, would not sleep. If the fiends of Hell could be washed in blood, and made new creatures, I think their restless activity which makes them go about like roaring lions seeking whom they may devour, would turn into another channel, and they would go about to win souls. Are we to go like snails in the course of good, while swifter than the roe or the hart men fly in the road of evil? Shall it always be so? The Christian pastor may forget the villager, but the parish priest will not. The Christian minister may not proclaim the Gospel, but from the oratory of the monks there will be no uncertain sound. Christian women may forget to visit the sick, but the so-called "sisters of mercy" will be there. You may turn aside, Christian, if you please, from your position in the ranks of Christ, but you will not find the servants of Satan so unfaithful. Oh that such restlessness might come upon us that we might have an insatiable hungering to do good, and an awful passion to bless our fellow men, that we might yearn and

sigh because others will not repent, and turn to God. May the Lord send us such an awakening; if not, our sin of sleeping is terrible indeed.

Now, what is it that causes us to sleep? I have heard some say that *it is having too much business.* I do not believe it! I do not find that you London Christians, as a body, are more asleep than country Christians. In fact, if I had my choice I might select my country Brothers and Sisters for a great many virtues, but certainly not for the virtue of being wide awake; for, alas, in many of our country Churches nothing can be conducted in a more slumbering manner. I think that of the two I would rather have you business men, with your pulses quickened by having so much to do, than I would have you go into the obscurity of the country where there is so little to stir the blood. I believe those who have the most worldly business can often serve God better than those who have but little.

But still, we must never throw our sins upon the Providence of God! What is it, then? I will tell you. First, we are inclined to slumber from *the evil of our nature.* This invests our sin with a double guilt. Master, deliver us from the guilt and then from the power of sin. All the while we are thus asleep about Divine things, we are wide awake like the rest of the world about other things. I have sometimes remarked the way in which men will speak out in the shop most distinctly, but only mumble in the Prayer Meeting. I have sometimes thought I have seen persons who at the sound of a shilling seemed to open their ears and start up, be just as much the opposite way when it came to doing things for Christ—first and foremost for this world, and last for the world to come—toiling like the ants to gain this world's dross, but as idle as a butterfly in regard to Divine things. This is so sad, because it proves that it is not lack of power to be active, but lack of will.

Next, it is very easy to send a man to sleep *if you give him the chloroform of bad doctrine.* That has sent half our Baptist churches to sleep. They have been taught that man is not responsible to God. They have been taught clear fate, and nothing better; and they have gone to sleep. And who, indeed, can take a dose of that without slumbering?

Then, *the sultry sun of prosperity* sends many to sleep. You are prospering too much. God seems to be too favorable to you in Providence, and then the soul begins to sleep. Fullness of bread is a strong temptation to a Christian. It has been asserted in high church papers that our youth, our young men and women, are dissatisfied with our services and system, and they are going to ritualism. I do not believe it. My observation goes to show it is not the case. There are some attendees of our places of worship who were with us when they were poor, who, having amassed a fortune, have retired to suburban villas and turned to places where they hear a Gospel alien to that which they heard when times were different with them. But it is not the case with the young men and women of our churches; I do not believe the blame rests with them. It is the power of wealth which comes to them. I admire that prayer of Mr. Whitefield's for a young man who had come into possession of a large

property, that God would give him Divine Grace to persevere under such a trial.

Then in some people it is *the intoxication of pride.* Get proud of your spiritual condition, and that will soon send you to sleep. In others it is the lack of heart which is at the bottom of everything they do. They never were intense, they never were earnest, and consequently they have such little zeal that that zeal soon goes to sleep. This is the age of the Enchanted Ground. He who can go through this age and not sleep must have something more than mortal about him. God must be with him, keeping him awake. You cannot be long in the soporific air of this particular period of time without feeling that in spiritual things you grow lax, for it is a lax age—lax in Doctrine, lax in principle, lax in morals, lax in everything—and only God can come in and help the Pilgrim to keep awake in this Enchanted Ground.

These, then, are some of the things to guard against. My time, unfortunately, is almost gone, and therefore I can only say a few words upon the second point.

II. What did Christ say to His people who were asleep? He said, "AWAKE YOU WHO SLEEP, ARISE FROM THE DEAD."

Let me have a little quiet talk with you then in the Master's name. Remember *that Jesus speaks this in love.* You never knew him do or say anything that was not in love. Has there ever been anything which has come either from His hands or His lips which has not been in love? Oh, then, believe that He would not have said, "Awake!" if it were not the kindest thing He could possibly say to you. He loves you then, though you love Him so little and go to sleep in His very Presence, and it is His Love which shows itself to you in the best possible way by that startling word, "Awake! Awake! Awake!" Sometimes a mother's love lulls her child to sleep, but if there is a house on fire the mother's love would take another expression and startle it from its slumber; and Christ's Love takes that turn when He says to you, "Awake! Awake! Awake!"

Again, since Jesus says this to you, be assured that it is *His Wisdom* as well as His Love that makes Him say it. He knows that you are losing much by sleeping. The thief is pilfering while you are resting; the sower of the bad seed is scattering it in the field, while you, who ought to have watched, are going away to those unhallowed sleeps. He would not have you be a loser, He would have you be rich and increased in goods spiritually, and thus it is His Wisdom that bids Him wake you. It is a wise Voice and a tender Voice, which says to the Christian—"Awake!"

It is a Voice, too, *which you ought to listen to,* for it is backed up by the authority of the Person from whom it comes. It is your Lord who says, "Awake!" What has He done for you? Shall I ask you what He has NOT done for you? You owe everything to Him. That robe that is now washed would have been black but for Him. Ah, some of you who are here today, oh, how much you owe! I know, as I look around at you, what God's Grace has done for you. Oh, Brother, your voice was the loudest in the tavern; many a time have you reeled home from the gin palace; your mouth could once curse and swear, but you are washed! And as for

myself, how much do I owe to the Grace of God! The most stubborn and self-willed of mortals cowed down before the feet of Christ to take and accept Him on His own terms! And ah, there are some of you who, like the Magdalen, would sit and wash His feet with tears, and would be glad to wipe them with the hairs of your head! Some of you mothers here owe all your children's souls to Him as well as your own. He saved your darlings; He has brought them to put their trust in Him. Oh, we are over our head and ears in debt to Christ. We are what good Rutherford used to call, "drowned debtors to Christ!" Oh the depths of our obligation! Oh, how high should be the heights of our gratitude since He has done so much for us! If He says, "Awake!"—oh, Master, we would not only awake, but we would crave Your pardon a thousand times that ever we should have fallen into this sinful sleep. It is your Lord who speaks; it is your Master who cries, "Awake! Awake!" Oh, loyal hearts and virgin souls, by the lilies of your love, and by the roses of His blood with which He bought you, awake! Awake! Awake, and ask for an earnestness which you may never lose again.

Further, *this is a Voice which has been very often repeated.* Christ has been saying, "Awake! Awake!" to some of us hundreds of times. You were sick, were you, a few months ago? That was Christ, as it were, shaking you in your sleep, and saying, "Awake, My Beloved, awake out of your unhealthy slumber!" You had a loss in business the other day, and you bemoaned it very much. Perhaps that, too, was the Master saying, "Awake!" A dear child was taken from you, and borne to Heaven; it was Christ saying to you, "Awake!" And we have had many awakenings in this House of Prayer. I am sure our Monday evening Prayer Meetings have often been a Voice to us—"Awake! Awake!" Sometimes a sermon, too, has come home from God to our hearts with—"Awake! Awake! Awake!" Oh, shall we never awake? Shall Christ stand always at yonder door with its rusty hinges, and shall He always say, "Open unto Me, My Love, My Dove, for My head is wet with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night"? Shall He always be shut out? Will we never open the door to Him and say, "We wake, Lord, we wake! Come in and sup with us that we may sup with You"?

Now, it seems to me *as if it were a personal cry* in the text. Did you notice the singular pronoun—"Awake, *you* who sleeps"? It does not say, "Awake *all* of you," but "Awake, you!" Shall I pick you out one by one? There are too many of you for that; but I might say, my dear venerable, gray-headed Friend, if there is any tendency in you to slumber, Jesus says, "Awake, *you*." And you, Maiden, you who have given your heart to your Savior in your young days, He says, "Awake, you who sleeps!" And you, young man with many talents, which you do not lay out for Christ as you ought; He says, "Awake, you who sleeps." And to the most slumbering of us, He seems to say it most loudly and most lovingly, "Awake, you who sleeps." May such a warning come home very personally!

And to close this point I may add that *He puts it very pressingly in the present tense*—"Awake," He says, "awake now." Oh, it is very easy to say,

"I hope I shall awake one day." But He says, "Awake now!" It is not what you will do in a few years, but now, now, NOW! I do not say that the word "now" is in the text, but it is there truly, too, in spirit. "Awake." If I say to a man, "Awake!" I do not mean that he is to awake in an hour's time, that would be absurd! I mean him to awake now. And Jesus says this to us—friends who know His Love and who have been visited by His Divine Grace; He says to us—"Awake now, My Beloved, and come forth to serve Me."

III. But I must close, and the last point is, THE PROMISE WITH WHICH CHRIST ENCOURAGES US TO AWAKE.

The promise is, "Christ shall give you light." What does that mean? Why, light may mean sometimes *instruction*. We are often in the dark, and puzzled about difficulties, but do you know half the difficulties in the Bible spring from a cold state of mind; but when the heart gets right, the head seems to get right too, in a great measure. I remember a person puzzling himself fearfully with that passage in Scripture about Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. He went and looked at Dr. Gill about it; he went to Thomas Scott about it, and he went to Matthew Henry about it; and these good Divines all puzzled him as much as they could, but they did not seem to clear up the matter. The good man could not understand how Jesus Christ could say as He did, "How often would I have gathered you, but you would not!" One day he received more Divine Grace, and developed a love for souls, and then the old skin of narrow-mindedness which had been once large enough for him began to crack and break, and he went to the passage then, and said, "I can understand it now; I do not know how it is consistent with such-and-such a Doctrine, but it is very consistent with what I feel in my heart." And I feel just the same. I used to be puzzled by that passage where Paul says that he could wish himself accursed from God for his Brethren's sake. Why, I have often felt the same, and now I understand how a man can say in the exuberance of his love to others, that he would be willing to perish himself if he might save them! Of course it never could be done, but such is the extravagance of a holy love for souls that it breaks through reason, and knows no bounds. Get the heart right and you get right upon many difficult points.

Again, I think the light here meant is a further kind of light, not merely the light of direction, guidance, and knowledge, but chiefly *the light of joy*. Oh, there are some of you who are generally in the dark. You do not know whether you are Christians or not half the time; You are spelling out your evidences, and so on. I compare you to a man who is almost drowned. He is alive, but how do they know it? Why, they have to hold a mirror up to his mouth, and if there is a little fog, then they say, "Yes, he breathes." Well, there are some of you who need such an experiment as that tried upon you, for nobody would know that you are alive except by some very delicate test. The Christian existence is within you, but the *manifestation* is so feeble that it is not seen. You do not know whether you are alive or not! Why, nobody ever doubts whether he is alive. A man in good health never says, "I do not know whether I am

alive or not." He goes to work; he takes his plow and drives it across the field, or goes to his business and works all day long; and he knows he is alive by what he does. And if some of you Christian people would only wake up from your sleepy state, and begin to labor for God, and to love souls, you would get such joy flooding through your spirits as you never knew before. It would be as though Heaven had opened up its floodgates and let the river of the Water of Life come bursting into your soul, and instead of being like a dry, howling wilderness, there would be a standing pool of water; no, a place in which the ships of your joy, and the galley with oars of your delight, might sail for many a day.

More Divine Grace and more peace, more light and more joy—I pray God that you may have these. I have often prayed to God that I might not be the pastor of an army of invalids. I would be glad enough to comfort them, and do my best to make this a hospital for them, but I want to be the captain of an army of soldiers, and to turn this place into a barracks for them. I want you to go out every day from Monday till Saturday, and on Sunday too, fighting for Christ, contending for the faith, seeking to gather in outcasts, looking after the poor and needy, helping the weak and feeble, comforting the disconsolate, and putting out all your strength in your Master's cause. We have enough Churches in London where they sleep. Oh, may God deliver us from having this place to be a huge cemetery, and make us to be a great House, a great City from which shall go forth the hosts and armies of the Lord to do battle for Him! May God send His Holy Spirit to abide among us in all His plenitude, and He shall have the Glory!

Now you all see this sermon is to the Christian. I tried to preach to seekers this morning [See Sermon #714, Volume 12—A SAVIOR SUCH AS YOU NEED—read/download, by God's Grace, all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons, and over 500 Spanish translations free of charge at www.spurgeongems.org.] and gave them their turn then. But if there is one here who has not found the Savior, I must add this word to him. The way of salvation is this—Trust Christ and you are saved. Christ suffered in the place of His people. God laid their sin on Him, and punished Him as if He were they, and whoever trusts Christ is forgiven, he is saved; and when he is saved then I invite him to exert his strength for his Master, but till then look at home and then look at Jesus, and God grant that this look at yourselves and at your Savior may be the means of your salvation, to the praise of the Glory of His Divine Grace.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EPHESIANS 5.

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PRAY FOR JESUS
NO. 717

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 21, 1866, *BY C. H. SPURGEON*, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Prayer also shall be made for Him continually."
Psalm 72:15.

HAVING on one or two occasions made use of the phrase, "praying for King Jesus," I have been somewhat surprised to find that it was not understood, and I have been rather astonished at receiving several notes asking for an explanation of what I supposed to be a matter of common knowledge. It seemed to hearers and readers of my sermons as if the phrase must be a mistake, as if it could not really be a correct thing to do, to pray for the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet one moment's reflection would have shown them that the expression is Scriptural, that you have it here if you have it nowhere else, "prayer also shall be made for Him continually." Our Lord is undoubtedly intended in this passage, for He it is in whom all nations of the earth shall be blessed, and whose name shall continue as long as the sun.

It is quite easy to see how we could pray for Christ if He were still on the earth. I suppose that when He was a Child His parents prayed for Him. They needed not to pray some of the prayers which we offer for *our* offspring, for He was sinless, but I can scarcely imagine that a mother's love could have been restrained from seeking the richest blessings for her heavenly Child; and when He grew up, and came among men, and His lovely Character began to be known, how could His disciples do otherwise than pray that He might be speeded in His good work? Can we suppose them to have been loyal to the Master if they did not often join their prayer with His that His Kingdom might come? Indeed, what is the prayer which He has taught us, "Our Father which are in Heaven," but in a certain sense, prayer for Jesus? "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth, even as it is in Heaven"—it is Christ's Kingdom, and Christ's Will, as well as the Will of the Father, and the Kingdom of the Father. That great cry which went up in the streets of Jerusalem when Jesus, in the days of His flesh, rode through them in state was a prayer—"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." Did not the multitude thus implore blessing upon the head of Him who came in Jehovah's name? His disciples might have done well if they had prayed for Him and with Him in Gethsemane, and it was a part of His griefs to find that they could not watch with Him one hour; it was ordained that He should tread the winepress alone. I think we shall all see that the same Spirit which made holy women minister to Him of their substance, which made the daughters of Salem weep for Him as He was led to His Crucifixion, must have prompted all His sincere followers to say Amen to this prayer, "Father, glorify Your Son," and what was this but praying for Him?

But it will be said, "None of these things apply to Him now." My Brothers and Sisters, think a little, and you will see that we can still pray

for Jesus, and you will remember that in our hymns we often do so, as for instance when we sing—

"Let all that dwell above the sky,
And air, and earth, and seas,
Conspire to lift Your glories high,
And speak Your endless praise."

For albeit that He is in one sense exalted to the utmost height of Glory, and reigns victorious over His enemies, yet, in another sense, He is here in the midst of His chosen host striving with principalities and powers. "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world," is the blessed assurance that Jesus is our Captain in the great fight of faith, and is still present in the battlefield. His great cause is here, His enterprise and business are here below. The work which He undertook to accomplish is not yet accomplished in the person of every one of His Elect. His blood has been fully shed and His Atonement has been perfected, but those for whom the Atonement was made are not yet all gathered in. Many sheep He has which are not yet of His fold. We are therefore to pray for Him, that the good work which He has undertaken may be prospered, and that one by one those whom His Father gave Him may be brought to Repentance and to Eternal Life.

Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus Christ describes Himself as being still persecuted and still suffering. He said to Saul, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" He calls His people Himself; they are His mystical body; and in praying for the Church we pray for Christ. He is the Head of the body, and you cannot pray for the body except you pray for the Head. We must put them all into one prayer. He is still struggling with the hosts of Darkness in His Church, still striving for the victory over sin in His people, and His people are waiting and longing for His Second Advent, which shall fulfill their brightest hopes. We must still pray for Him, not personally, but relatively; for His cause, for His Kingdom, for His Gospel, for His people, for His blood-bought ones who as yet are in the ruins of the Fall, for His Second Coming, and glorious reign. In this sense, I take it, the text is meant that "prayer also shall be made for Him continually."

And now, Brothers and Sisters, I want, keeping to the one thought of the text, to show the Light of God which gleams from it.

I. And, in the first place, if it is so, if we do indeed pray for Christ continually, how this thought ELEVATES THE TONE OF OUR PRAYERS!

Think awhile; there are some prayers which are terribly narrow, selfish, and contracted; the suppliant mentions nothing but his own experience, or, at the widest, the trials of his household; he goes through his own private interests, and rehearses the sorrows of his own little sphere; he repeats them; he never seems to get beyond them. At family prayer in such a case, "Give us this day our daily bread" seems to be the major petition, and "Forgive us our debts" is perhaps the only other. The man prays like the blind horse at the mill, he travels round, and round, and round continually the same circle of prayer. Now, if that Brother could but get into his mind once and for all that there were a great many others to pray for beside himself and beside his family, if he could remember that Paul wills, in the name of the Holy Spirit, that prayer should be made for all ranks and conditions of men, if such a man could hear all the ministers of Christ saying, "Brethren, pray for us," and could

remember that we are to pray for all the household of faith, why that would tend to get the man off his narrow selfishness; but if he could grasp the still higher thought that in coming to the Mercy Seat we may come *for* Christ as well as *by* Christ, and may have a prayer to pray even for Him who is the Apostle, and High Priest of our profession, he would surely look upon prayer as being altogether a different thing from what he had conceived it to be; he would get out of that narrow rut, and begin to pray something more worthy of a child of God.

Full conviction of this thought would save us from selfishness in connection with those prayers which have a wider circumference but have their secret center in ourselves. We do pray for the conversion of sinners, but I have been afraid sometimes lest I have been praying for sinners to be converted under my own ministry, with the view of being thought a useful preacher, and it is not impossible that some of you in your classes, seeking to do good, may have desired usefulness with the view of wearing it as a jewel to ornament yourselves, or, if you sought not honor for self exactly, yet it may have been for some honored person whom your affection has made to be part of yourselves. Now I do not think I ought to desire conversions for the sake of my minister, even though his ministry may be very dear to me, nor for the honor of my Christian Sister or Christian Brother, though their work may be exceedingly precious in my sight. I must take care that I supplicate for souls to be saved, and the Kingdom of Christ to be advanced with no sinister aim mingling with the prayer. Now if I pray it *for Christ,* if I pray that sinners may be converted for His Glory, to show forth the power of His Gospel, to let men see that the pleasure of the Lord is prospering in His hands, then I shall ask for the mercies which I need with a better Grace, and be less likely to "have not, because" I "have asked amiss."

And do you not see, also, how this would lift us beyond the narrow bounds of sectarianism? I mean just this. There is a possibility of desiring the extension of the Savior's Kingdom only in one direction, namely, in that direction in which we are most interested. It is right for a man to love that body of Christians with which he is most intimately connected, and to love them best because he believes that they are most faithful to the Truth of God, but he should not desire their increase merely for the prevalence of a party name; he must desire it for the increase of the one great universal Church of Christ, and for the extension of the Truth of God because it is the Truth of God, not because it happens to be a Truth which he has received. I heard a speech the other day by a beloved Wesleyan Brother, and it did me much good to hear it. He said, "If God is pleased to scourge us Wesleyans for our sins, and to withhold a large measure of success, I will then pray that he would bless you Baptists, and make up through you what the Church may lose through us." When I heard him say it and knew he meant it, I could not but feel my soul knit to such a man; a man who loved the Church of Christ and loved it for Christ's sake, for the sake of souls, and for the Truth's sake. This is just how all of us ought to feel, that we wish to see all the Churches multiply and increase, and wherever Truth is preached, wish to see that Truth prevail.

Dear Friends, if we adopt the thought that we must pray for conversions *for Jesus' sake,* we shall be uplifted from the realm of

jealous bickering; we shall say, "No, I do not desire conversions because of that Church, or that man, or that body, nor even merely because of the whole Church itself, but I desire the extension of the Truth of God *for Christ;* I pray *for Him."* Your minds will be enlarged, your souls will be expanded, and you will have come to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.

Moreover, I have noticed, dear Friends, that when we can ask for any deliverance as for Christ, we may pray very earnestly against an evil without any bitterness mingling with the prayer. It is the duty of every Christian to pray against Antichrist, and as to what Antichrist is no sane man ought to raise a question. If it is not the Popery in the Church of Rome and in the Church of England, there is nothing in the world that can be called by that name. If there were to be issued a hue and cry for Antichrist, we should certainly take up those two churches on suspicion, and they certainly would not be let loose again, for they so exactly answer the description. Popery anywhere, whether it be Anglican or Romish, is contrary to Christ's Gospel, and is the Antichrist, and we ought to pray against it. It should be the daily prayer of every Believer that Antichrist might be hurled like a millstone into the flood and sink to rise no more. If we can pray against error *for Christ* because it wounds Christ, because it robs Christ of His Glory, because it puts sacramental efficacy in the place of His Atonement, and lifts a piece of bread into the place of the Savior, and a few drops of water into the place of the Holy Spirit, and puts a mere fallible man like ourselves up as the Vicar of Christ on earth; if we pray against it, because it is *against Him,* we shall love the persons though we hate their errors; we shall love their souls though we loathe and detest their dogmas, and so the breath of our prayers will be sweetened, because we turn our faces towards Christ when we pray. We are to pray *for Him.*

Do you know, dear Brothers and Sisters, it seems to me to make prayer so sweet to think that we can pray *for Jesus.* The Mercy Seat is inestimably precious to us when we can pray there for ourselves; when we can bring the case of a dear child or loving friend, it is a blessing for which to be perpetually grateful. Oh the blessedness of prayer! Our hearts might break for lack of a way of expressing our love if we had not this method of telling it out before the Mercy Seat on the behalf of those dear to us. But, Beloved, to think that I may pray *for Christ,* that I may pray for Him who prayed for me, and plead on His behalf who with sighs and tears pleaded on the behalf of poor helpless me! It ought to be a very great comfort to some of you who cannot do much else beside pray for Jesus. I daresay you have thought, "I wish I could preach for Christ"—it is a very laudable wish; covet earnestly the best gifts; but if you feel that you cannot speak to edification, and are thus debarred from that honorable exercise, you must seek another mode of service. Then you have said, "I wish I could give to Christ's cause. If He would make me His steward, if He would trust me with money, how willingly would I consecrate it to Him!" But you have no money and you are perhaps so poor you cannot do anything in that direction, though you would do very much if you could. Now, what a mercy it is that there is this which you can do; you can pray for Christ; you can come to the treasury and drop in your prayers, and if they are all you have, they will be like the widow's

two mites, which were not precious to Christ because they were mites nor because she was a widow, but because they were all her living.

Ah, if your prayers are all you can give God, and all your living, drop them into the Church's treasury, and say, "Well, I cannot do much else, but my daily constant prayer shall go up that the Lord would prosper the Gospel of His dear Son, and make Him to rule and govern the wide world over." Dear Friends, here is room for questioning ourselves. Have you and I been neglectful in this form of prayer? If we have, I am persuaded that it will cast a flatness and a staleness over all our devotional exercises. If you have not prayed for Christ, I am afraid, dear Friend, that much of your own prayer will have been displeasing to God. Remember that the same Christ who tells us to say, "Give us this day our daily bread," had first given us this petition, "Hallowed be Your name; Your Kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." Do not let your prayers be all about your own sins, your own needs, your own imperfections, your own trials, but let them climb the starry ladder and get up to Christ Himself, and then, as you draw near to the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat, offer this prayer continually, "Lord, extend the Kingdom of Your dear Son." Such a petition, fervently presented, will tend to elevate the spirit and tenor of our prayers.

II. In the second place, praying for Christ will suggest to us MANY THEMES OF PRAYER. To pray for Christ is a very large topic, for it will bring before us something fresh for every day in the week. I must plead for Christ's cause on earth according to its present condition and circumstances; consequently, I shall need to keep my eyes open to see in what plight the Kingdom of Christ is. As a general looks along the whole line of battle, and sends reinforcements where the line appears to be most weak, so will the true Christian who prays for Christ, look along the line of the Church's work and pray most for that which is in the worst state, offering up his prayers for Christ according as Christ's cause seems to need those prayers. There are some topics which constantly claim our care—you may always pray for them. One is that Christ may have always *enough witnesses for the Truth* on earth. Your Lord has said, "Pray you the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest." It is a prayer much forgotten, but it needs to be revived in the Church before we shall see much revival. There are many Churches now that cannot find pastors. In some districts, especially in America, there are Churches by the score without ministers, and apparently they must remain so for years to come. There is a general complaint throughout all denominations of a shortage of earnest first-class men who shall devote themselves to the ministry, and this shortage will be and will increase until the Church takes it up and prays that He who ascended up on high and received gifts for men, would be pleased to give her again her teachers and ministers, and her evangelists, each according to his proper station.

We must pray for men of God, and you need never be afraid that the prayer will be needless in your lifetime, for if we had 10 times as many witnesses for Christ, the world needs them. Look at China with its millions, India with its teeming masses, and even our colonies wide and far spread with a fearful lack of preachers of the Word. There are large companies of men who speak our own language and who left our own

shores, who, for lack of teachers, are almost subsiding into heathendom, and will perish for lack of knowledge unless there is a fresh host raised up of preachers of the Cross of Christ. Pray, then, dear Friends, that God would find out and equip men to be heralds of peace to the people, and help those of us who labor even beyond our strength to aid young men whom God has called to His work to get the knowledge which their office requires.

Another prayer may always go with it, namely, *pray for those who are already in the field.* "Brethren, pray for us," said the Apostle. If you have nothing to pray for, for yourselves, here stands one before you who needs *all* your prayers and feels that he needs them, and humbly with his whole heart begs you to let him live in your private devotions. Brothers and Sisters, we are rich when you enrich us with your supplications; we are strong when you strengthen us with your prayers. A few loving tears shed for us in private will be of more value to us than anything else you can possibly bestow upon us. Some of my Brothers are fainting from lack of success, hundreds of them are growing cold because of the coldness of the church members who surround them; some of them are struggling with poverty—all of us, alas, are too weak for the work we have engaged in; pray for us. You are praying for Christ, and if we are His servants, if He has truly sent us, you pray for the Master's business when you pray that the servants may do that business well. You pray for the Owner of the vineyard when you ask that the trimmers of the vines may know how to execute their tasks.

And when these two prayers have passed from your hearts to your lips, there is another—*pray that God would open doors of utterance to us among the people.* Ask that God would send the spirit of hearing throughout this city to begin with, and then throughout all England. It is poor gain that you have the preachers unless the people will listen—the trumpet sounds in vain if men plug up their ears. God can in a moment, as we know by past experience, influence people to say, "Come and let us go up to the House of the Lord." I believe that through the last visitation of the cholera there is a spirit of hearing in London such as has not been for many years. Thank God for this. Ask that a desire to hear may be continued and increased. Intercede with the great Lord of All that in every country the hearing ear may be bestowed, that God's faithful servants may be cheerfully received, and be enabled to accomplish their errand with a hundred-fold success.

But, my Brothers and Sisters, I have only opened the bag, I have only commenced the list of matters for which you could pray if you would really pray for Christ. I would ask you then to pray especially *for the conversion of many souls.* This is Christ's delight, His love, His heart's joy. You were told last Sunday morning that there was "joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents." The angels sing, but Christ is the Choirmaster there. He is the Chief Musician, for He has the greatest joy! It is His joy, His Heaven to see sinners saved. Pray, pray for *Him* then; you are praying for the Shepherd when you pray for the lost sheep. You are praying for the King when you ask that the lost jewels of His crown may be found and set therein. Oh that we loved souls as Christ loves them, then we would hunger and thirst after their salvation! Oh for the

tender heart of the weeping Savior, that no soul might go down to Hell not sprinkled with our tears!

Brothers and Sisters, *pray for those who are saved,* or who make a profession of it, that they may be kept from falling into sin. You are in an eminent degree praying for Christ when you offer such an intercession, for He is crucified afresh when professors fall. If I had an offer now of losing this right arm or having to endure in this Church some such falls as we have had to mourn over, and as the world has seen of late among high professors, I do feel I can say without hypocrisy, I would choose to be cut limb from limb sooner than see those whom I have loved and honored fall from the faith; for it is a bitter thing to us who are ministers of Christ—it is our curse and plague—it costs us sleepless nights and miserable days when we hear of those who apparently did run well but turn back to the world, who play the Judas and become Satan's servants, though once they wore the uniform of Christ. Pray for professors that they fall not, and as you hope to be kept yourselves, I charge you pray for every tempted soul that his faith fail him not in the trying hour.

Forget not to pray for the Church of God that it may be knit together in one. Do not ask that it may be made uniform; that is neither desirable nor probable, but pray that all Christians may be one as the Father is one with the Son; that is, one in spirit; so that we, divided as we always shall be as to our thoughts upon many points, may be one in the hope that animates us, in the spirit that actuates us, one in the life of God that pulsates in our souls. Pray that the Churches may be knit together in holy love, and may strive together for nothing but the advancement of the faith of Christ.

Nor have I finished. When you have thus prayed *for Christ,* and I am sure it is all for Christ if you so pray—then ask that the kingdoms of this world may become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. Let no ideas of Doctrine check you in such a prayer; you are bound to pray it. The example of Prophets and of Apostles urges you forward, your allegiance to King Jesus should compel you to it. You believe that He will come, but believe also the Truth of God which is equally certain that He shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river even to the ends of the earth. Though you may not be able to reconcile that universal reign with the other Truth of His coming as a thief in the night, do not try to reconcile it; believe it because you find it in the Bible and, believing it, pray that you may see it. Do not indulge the thought that Christ is not to reign in China, that He is not to be King where the gods of the heathens rule. My Brothers and Sisters, He is to be so. Do not think He has only suffered upon Calvary to gather out a few from among men—the day is coming when He shall gather out a multitude that no man can number who shall be His in the day of His appearing. Pray for this; pray for the all-conquering progress of the Gospel of King Jesus. Do not restrict your thoughts and limit your desires; be ambitious for Christ. Nothing but universal monarchy ought to content you, as only it will content the Master. The little stone cut out of the mountain without hands must fill the whole earth, and every other image, though it is an image of gold or iron, shall be broken in pieces before the dominion of the Kingdom of the

Lord Jesus Christ! Pray for it, my Brothers and Sisters, pray for it day and night, and let the verse of Dr. Watts be true of you—

"For Him shall endless prayer be made,
And praises throng to crown His head."

Thus I have tried to show you that this Doctrine of praying for Christ instructs us in a variety of topics. I should again like to ask the question, whether you really have been up to the mark in this, whether there has not been a good deal of negligence upon many of these points? I am afraid I shall have to confess negligence myself, and perhaps most of you will; but do not let us remain satisfied with confession; let us ask for Divine Grace that our prayers, from now on, shall be larger, wider, broader, more heavenly, more generous, more like the thoughts of the Infinite Mind, while we chiefly and above all things remember the work, and interest, and cause of Christ. As He remembers us, so let us remember Him.

III. Thirdly, it appears to me that if we were to look upon our prayers as being in a great measure prayers for Christ, this would tend to inspire us with PECULIAR EARNESTNESS.

I *must* pray for Christ or else I am not *consistent with my profession.* I profess to be His servant; what, and not ask for the success of my Master? I avow myself to be His disciple—a disciple, and not anxious that the Truths which I receive from my Teacher should win their way? I call myself His friend; He calls me so in return—a friend, and not show myself friendly enough to put up a word of prayer for Him? He has said I am His brother—a brother who does not pray for his brother is most unbrotherly! Moreover, He has deigned to call the collective body of His people His spouse—a spouse who does not pray for her husband is most unwifely. We must not so act, if we are Christians in deed and in truth. One of the first marks of Christians was that they met together and sang hymns in the honor of one called Christus, and another mark is that they meet together and pray for the extension of the Kingdom of one whom they called Jesus.

I have a second reason for so praying, namely, that *gratitude dictates* me to pray. Oh, what has Jesus done for me! When I am praying for His Church I am apt to think of her faults, perhaps of her unkindness to me, and my prayer lacks force; but when I pray for *Christ*, so good, so tender, so self-denying, laying down His life for His sheep, bleeding out that life for me, for me a sinner, and once His enemy—how can I but pray for Him? Pray for You, Jesus? This is but a poor return for all Your groans and bloody sweat, and agony for me. I think I shall love prayer more than I have ever done, if I am able to remember that I can speak a word in God's ear for Him whose blood speaks for me. It will be a delightful satisfaction for me in my times of communion with my Father who is in Heaven to say to Him—"and my Father, there is One whom You love, who died on my behalf, though I deserved it not, and I pray You glorify Him, increase His Kingdom, help me to honor Him, cause human hearts to feel His power; give Him dominion over tens of thousands of the sons of men." Does it not, dear Friend, quicken the pulse of your prayer? Do you not feel as if you cannot pray at a sluggish rate when you pray for Jesus? I have heard some people say, "I could not speak upon any subject but one," and that one subject has been some kind friend who helped them

in time of trouble. "Oh," they say, "I could speak about *him;* that is a topic I could always find words upon." Someone to whom you are grateful holds a key with which to unloose your tongue. And if you cannot pray for anything else, surely you can, you must, you shall pray for the Lord Jesus.

As both our consistency and our gratitude will thus quicken us to prayer if we pray for Christ, surely *our love to Him* will tend to do the same. Loved of Christ from before all worlds, we love Him in return. We never pray more fervently, I suppose, than for those whom we love best. He who does not love sinners cannot pray aright for them. When we love sinners, then the prayer is fervent, and when we love Jesus, then will the prayer be earnest. Love is the flaming torch to kindle the pile of our devotions.

Brothers and Sisters, we have something more than love to Christ; we are, if we are true Believers, *one with Him,* members of His body. All that concerns Him concerns us, not because we are merely partners, but because we are part and parcel of Himself. There is but one Christ, and His Church is one with Him. We, members of His Church, are each one in living union with Him. No man, says Paul, ever yet hated his own flesh. Now, if I, professing to be a Christian, were to neglect Christ, I would be neglecting myself, since He takes me into union with Himself. Do I ask that His Kingdom may come? It is a Kingdom in which I am to reign. Do I ask that His Glory may be increased? It is a Glory of which I am to be a partaker. Do I crave that His joy may be full? That joy is to be in me. How can I but pray, when I am one with the Savior for whom I put up my supplications? I am afraid I cannot put what I mean into words which carry it home to you; but to my own mind it is like a wafer made with honey which I can roll under my tongue and enjoy in its sweetness, to think that I have the possibility of pleading for Jesus. I feel convinced that it has a tendency to blow up the flame of prayer. I trust that the man who traveled slowly before will all at once put on his speed when he comes to pray for Christ Jesus.

IV. Very briefly, in the fourth place. If I can look at my prayers in the light which has been mentioned, it will tend very much to give me SPECIAL ENCOURAGEMENT in offering them at the Mercy Seat.

He who has to present a petition will go with great confidence when he feels that the person for whom he makes intercession is exceedingly well worthy. Brothers and Sisters, if I pray for a guilty sinner I may have confidence, but when I pray for such a One as the Lord Jesus, my confidence can have no bounds set to it. Observe what He is. He is in constant favor with God. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." From the excellence of His Character and the *dignity of His Person,* He deserves to be the Beloved of His Father, and He is such. He is God's Well-Beloved. It is easy work, then, to plead for Him. Now, if I pray for my minister, for the Church, for the conversion of sinners, I may feel a little difficulty, but when I can make sure that I am praying for these for Christ's sake and with a view to His honor, and am thus virtually praying *for* Christ, why then, if enabled by the Holy Spirit, it becomes easy to pray because I know I must succeed when I am asking honor for Him whom the King delights to honor. Brethren, when I think upon the *merits* of Christ in the matter of His Mediatorial sufferings, how

it encourages me to pray. I ask that He may be crowned who was obedient to death, even the death of the Cross. Can this be denied? Is not the crown well earned? Can the reward be withheld? I ask that the pierced hands may be filled with the scepter, and that the feet once nailed to the Cross may be planted upon earth's dominions as upon a footstool. Can it be refused? Am I not asking that which His merit deserves, which His triumph claims and wins?

In this case I have something more to plead, I have *God's Promise.* It is written, "He shall see His seed; He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands." It is easy work to pray when we are grounded and bottomed, as to our desires, upon God's own Promise. How can He who gave the word refuse to keep it? Immutable Veracity cannot demean itself by a lie, and Eternal Faithfulness cannot degrade itself by neglect. God must bless His Son, His Covenant binds Him to it. That which the Spirit prompts us to ask for Jesus is that which God decrees to give Him. Brothers and Sisters, whenever you are praying for the Kingdom of Christ, let your eyes behold the dawning of the blessed day which draws near when the Crucified shall receive His coronation in the place where men rejected Him. The cause of Christ is downtrodden now, it shall not be so forever. We have been for centuries like soldiers who keep the field against a foe inveterate and mighty; we have been wearily waiting in the trenches; we have been mournfully standing behind the bulwarks; but the day is coming when the Master shall say to us what the Hebrew Prophet said to Israel's tribes at the Red Sea, "Forward, forward," and then we will be no longer merely keeping the ground but winning province after province for King Jesus; no longer storing our arrows in our quivers that they may be ready for the onslaught, but fitting them to the string and sending them like a mighty shower, we shall march to triumph and to universal victory. Courage, you who prayerfully work and toil for Christ with success of the very smallest kind, it shall not be so always; better times are before you. Your eyes cannot see the blissful future; borrow the telescope of Faith, wipe the misty breath of your doubts from the glass; look through it and see the coming Glory; Messiah's Kingdom comes, the trumpet shall soon sound, peace shall be proclaimed; His saints shall reign in joy!

Before long the millennial era shall begin, and Jesus shall have His own. Behold Him reigning upon the Throne of His father David. The kings of the Isles bring him presents, Sheba and Seba offer Him their gifts. It must be so, Brothers and Sisters, Christ has not died merely to win this little island, and a few other nations, He has died to redeem this whole round world as a jewel which He will wear in His crown, and He shall have it yet; I say the whole round world shall yet shine like a pearl in His diadem; He must, He shall reign over all nations till every enemy is put under foot. The sails that whiten every sea shall bear His messengers to the islands of the South, the caravans that cross the desert shall convey His ambassadors to proclaim in the far-off oasis or among the wandering Bedouins His sacred name. The gates of brass which deny Him entrance, must be broken; the bars of iron that shut out His heralds from any land, must be snapped. Hoary systems of superstition must crumble, and the moles and bats shall yet be the sole companions of the gods of heathendom. Rejoice, rejoice, the cause for which you plead is

one which Heaven ordains to bless. Everlasting Decrees stand like lions to guard the Throne of Christ! The mighty arm of the Most High is made bare to avenge His own Elect. High shall the banner of the Cross be lifted; soon shall the shout of victory make Heaven's loftiest arches ring, and Hell itself shall tremble at the dreaded sound, for the King Immortal, Eternal, Invisible, must reign and put down all dominion and power, and then shall He give the Kingdom to God, even the Father.

V. In closing, the last thought which occurred to me was this—when we put our prayer in such a light that we pray for Christ it DEMANDS CONSISTENT ACTION. I cannot pray for Christ and then rise from my knees and go and sin against the very Kingdom which I hope to spread. I ask you what is it but damnable hypocrisy for a man to say, "Your Kingdom come," and then to go out and by inconsistent conduct, pull down the walls of Zion? What shall I say of that professor whose daily life in ordinary business is a continual splattering the Gospel with mud, and yet he says, "Your Kingdom come"? Away with the hypocritical lips which can honor Christ in public, when the hands, the true token of the heart, will afterwards privately pluck down the Cross. Ah, my Hearers, how many professors do this! How many who even give and contribute generously will afterwards in the way in which they get their money or seek to get it, or in the conduct of their daily business, or in their families, bring infinitely more discredit upon religion than their contributions can ever bring honor to the Cross. If you pray for Christ, live like He lived. If you profess to desire His prosperity, do not, I pray you, cause Him to be wounded in the house of His friends.

But further, this is not enough. If I really pray for Christ I must take care to be on my watch to know what to pray for, so as to make my prayer a sensible prayer, a prayer of the understanding. Some members of the Church do not know what the Church needs at the present moment. They could not plead for Sunday schools, for they never take the trouble to inquire into their present condition. Could some of you pray for our own school as it should be prayed for? You could pray a sort of general hit-or-miss prayer, but you do not know whether the Sunday school is well attended, you do not know whether the teachers are godly young men and women and knit together in love, or whether they are all divided and split into factions. We ought to know as Church members, it seems to me, something about all the agencies, but all about some one agency in which we take particular concern; and we should get to be acquainted with the condition of the Church of which we are members, and also as far as our means will allow us we should be acquainted with the condition of the Church of God at large. We should take interest in it, feeling that it is our own concern, and then when we pray we should pray with better spirit, understanding what we are asking for.

Then, Friends, if we did this we are not afraid but what the last thing would be well attended to, namely, that we should take care that we add to our prayers our continual personal service. The old fable of the priest, who would not give the man a farthing but would give him his prayers, is very like many professors. They pray for the Kingdom, but what are they doing? Many young men who are quietly at home in England ought to be missionaries abroad; many others who are following their calling successfully ought to have devoted themselves to the ministry; and there

are many Christian men who are making money for themselves who have got enough and ought to shut up shop for themselves and keep shop for Christ—they ought to make money for Christ with as much earnestness as I would preach the Gospel for Christ. I have no doubt that many would thus serve the Master far more eminently than do half the professed preachers. Oh, if you are not doing *something* for Jesus let your closets chide you, let your hymns, which you have been singing about His coming and His triumph—let them provoke you!

But oh, my Brothers and Sisters, instead of appealing to all these considerations, I shall put it upon this footing. By Him who loved you, if indeed He loved you; by Him who died for you, if indeed you have a share in His Passion; by Him who lives for you, if indeed you have been quickened together with Him; by Him who pleads for you this day before the Eternal Throne, if indeed your names are on His breastplate; I do charge you live to Jesus, live now to Him; live while you live, live with all the possible energy of life. Let the Love of Christ be an all-consuming passion with you! Find out some way in which to increase His Kingdom. Ah, my Hearers, I bless God for you because the most of you are serving Him. I rejoice in you. You are the jewels of my crown of rejoicing, because you *do* serve the Master. Many of you live even Apostolic lives in your eagerness to spread abroad the Truth of God; but alas, some of you I might speak of "even weeping," because you are indifferent and almost dead to the blessed power of love within the soul.

May God revive us all! May the Holy Spirit compel us to more consecrated living! I am in hopes that the Prayer Meetings held every morning and evening will be the means of bringing the Church into a warm-hearted, happy, holy, earnest state, and that there will not be one left among us whose soul shall have been so dead as never to himself have said, "This is my work; Christ is my King, and now I will live for Him and pray for Him in the hope that I may at last die and be with Him where He is, and behold His Glory, the Glory which His Father gave Him, and be one with Him in Heaven forever and ever."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
PSALM 72; PSALM 118:21-29.

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THE STANDARD UPLIFTED IN THE FACE OF THE FOE
NO. 718

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 28, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."
Isaiah 59:19.

THE Hebrew seems to be very difficult to interpret in this verse, and there have been as many translations given it as there are days in the month. Upon the whole one is most satisfied with the translation of our authorized version; and without troubling your minds with a host of various renderings, we will keep to the one before us, which, even if it should not happen to be the precise Truth taught in the passage, is nevertheless a great Scriptural Truth, and one which it is important for us just now to remember. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." This is referred by Dr. Gill and sundry other commentators to the latter days in which they believe there will be a most terrible apostasy, when the Man of Sin shall reach a yet greater development than at present, and the Christian Church shall be brought to its very lowest ebb—at such a time the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard for the Truth of God, and by the power of His Grace the Kingdom of Jesus shall be revealed in fullest Glory. We are not, however, inclined to interpret this text in a restricted manner, as relating solely to one period of time. Nothing shall induce me to attempt to interpret the prophecies. By God's Grace I will be content to expound the Gospel. I believe it to be one of the most fatal devices of Satan to turn aside useful Gospel ministers from their proper work into idle speculations upon the number of the beast, and the meaning of the little horn. The prophecies will interpret themselves by their fulfillment, but no expositor has yet arisen who has been able to do it. Providence is the true interpreter of prophecy—

"God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

But for us to try the mysterious visions of Daniel and John before they are fulfilled will, I believe, be worse than folly; it will be a guilty waste of energy which should all be spent in the winning of souls.

We shall only consider the general principle, which is clear enough—that when the enemy shall come in the greatest force against the people of God, at such times God's Holy Spirit shall put forth His glorious Power, and a standard shall be lifted up against the inroads of the foe.

We shall first refer the text to *the holy war in our own hearts;* and secondly, *to the holy war which is being waged in the world,* not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual wickedness in high places.

I. First we shall take the general statement of the text as referring to THE CONFLICT WHICH IS RAGING IN THE CHRISTIAN'S INNER MAN. It is well for us to distinctly *understand the position of the Christian.* This is not the land of our triumph, neither is this the period of our rest. If we bind our brows with laurel, and cast aside our armor, our folly will be extreme. The ship is not yet in the harbor, many storms must yet beat upon her. The warrior has not slain the last of his foes, neither has the pilgrim fought with the last of the giants. The moment of conversion is rather the commencement than the closing of spiritual warfare, and until the Believer's head shall recline upon the pillow of Death he will never have *finished* his conflicts. The war will not be over till we shall depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Beloved Christian, you are in the land where foes abound. There are enemies within you; you are not delivered from the influence of inbred sin. The new nature is of Divine Origin, and it cannot sin because it is born of God; but the old nature, the carnal mind, is there too, and it is not reconciled to God, neither indeed, can it be; and therefore it strives and struggles with the new nature. The house of Saul in our heart wars against the house of David, and tries to drive it out and despoil it of the crown. This conflict you must expect to have continued with more or less violence till you enter into Rest.

Moreover, in the world without there are multitudes of foes. This vain world is no friend to the principle of the work of Divine Grace. If you were of the world the world would love its own, but as you are not of the world but of a heavenly race, you may expect to be treated as an alien and foreigner, no, as a hated and detested foe. All sorts of snares and traps will be laid for you; those who sought to entangle the Master in His speech will not be more lenient towards you. Moreover there is one whose name is called "the enemy," the "Evil One"—he is the leader among your adversaries; hating God with all his might, he hates that which he sees of God in you. He will not spare the arrows in his infernal quiver; he will shoot them all at you. There are no temptations which he knows of—and he understands the art well from long practice—there are no temptations which he will not exercise upon you. He will sometimes fawn upon you, and at other times will frown; he will lift you up, if possible, with self-righteousness, and then cast you down with despair. You will always find him your fierce, insatiable foe. Know this then, and put on the whole armor of God; march with your sword always drawn in your hand, as one who sees a foe in the path.

The text leads us to *look for seasons when this position will be more than ordinarily perilous.* Who that has gone on pilgrimage does not know that at certain times the enemy comes in upon him like a flood? Like a flood—suddenly, without notice, as when the mountain lake bursts through its banks, and rushes into the valley beneath, irresistibly destructive, sweeping everything before it in its headlong flood! Insatiable, sparing neither cattle, nor abode of man, nor provender for the ox, nor corn for the household, drowning young and old in one watery grave, with cold unfeeling power destroying all within its awful sweep! The flood has no compassion, and yields to no entreaties. Such

and so terrible are the onsets of our spiritual foes. When sins, and doubts, and temptations assail us, who can without Divine Aid stand against them? Who is able to resist them? You who are veterans in the spiritual fight, you know right well, that there are times when kings go forth to battle, seasons when the traitors within are unusually troublesome, and when you have need of extraordinary Grace.

It will be well for you who know the spiritual conflict to be *thoroughly conscious of your own utter impotence against this terrific danger.* What can a man do against a flood? How shall he escape it or stem it? The strongest swimmer, though he strains every muscle, must, if he is unaided, yield to its overwhelming force. If a man has nothing to depend upon but his own vigorous struggling, what can he do against a foaming torrent? Not all the impetuous fury of a rushing flood can exceed the fury of our enemies; where is the human strength which can endure its force? Christian, you are surrounded with enemies, and you, in your own person, are helpless in the day of battle. If you are not clothed with heavenly armor, you are like a naked man into whose flesh every dart must penetrate; if the shield of Faith shall not cover you, the spears of the tempter will soon reach your heart. You are crushed as a moth, and as easily trampled upon as a worm. You are as weak as water, as frail as dust. Your strength, your fancied strength, is perfect weakness, then what must your weakness be? Your highest natural wisdom is folly, then what must your folly be? As well should a bird with broken wing attempt to mount into the skies as you attempt to reach Heaven by your own strength. As well should a child with a straw hope to stand against a host of armed men, as you to bear the onslaught of your spiritual enemies, unless the mighty God of Jacob should be your defense. Your warfare needs the Eternal Arm to bear you through it, and yet you are weakness itself, how shall you be able to achieve the victory? Cease from self-confidence. Know yourself to be feebleness itself. Look above you to a nobler and surer source of strength than yourself!

The text after having plainly bid us to thoroughly realize our position, and after suggesting to us our weakness, bids us *turn to our only help*, a Helper mysterious but Divine. When the enemy comes in like a flood, what then? Shall the Christian stem it? It is not so written! Shall he avoid it? Not thus is it in the Word. Shall he fly to his minister? Shall he gather together his Christian friends, and shall they conjointly dam the stream or turn the battle? Not they; they are all alike weak, and their union will bring no strength. What can a multitude of ciphers make? They are each one nothing, and add them all together they make but nothing. The united fullness of so much emptiness is only a greater display of emptiness. The united wisdom of a thousand fools is only so much more folly. Where then does the text direct us? It reminds us of One whose name we mention with affectionate reverence—the Spirit of the Lord. What do we not owe to Him already? Blessed Spirit! You are He who sought us when we were strangers, wandering from the fold of God; who strove with us when our desperate wills were set on mischief; who bowed us down at length as He convicted us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come.

Blessed Spirit! It is to Him we owe our present holy comfort. He brought us to the Savior's Cross, and opened our blind eyes to see the wonders of Atoning Love. He endeared the Savior, applied the promise, gave us the Spirit of Adoption, and taught us to say, "Abba, Father." It was by His living Power that we were quickened and made to live. We were lying, like Lazarus, rotting in the grave, until He called us forth. It is by His teaching that we have been enlightened thus far in the things of Christ. He has taught us all things, and brought all things to our remembrance, whatever Christ delivered unto us. Up till now He has been our indwelling Guide, illuminating the darkness of our faith, constraining the waywardness of our will, sanctifying our nature, and bearing us onward against ourselves towards the ultimate perfection for which our spirit pants. Blessed Spirit! Brothers and Sisters, let us never grieve Him. "Quench not the Spirit." Let His faintest admonitions be obeyed. Whatever He says to you, do it. Let His Power in our spirits be like that of the centurion in the ranks which he commanded. If He says unto us, "Go," may we go; and if He says unto His servant, "Do this," may it be said, "He does it." Let us beware of losing the comforts of His Presence lest we have mournfully to bemoan His absence, crying out—

"Return, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet Messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made You mourn,
And drove You from my breast."

Let us cultivate an affectionate dependence upon His Power and Presence. In all our Christian exercises let us wait upon Him for strength. Let us entreat Him to incite our prayers and inspire our songs, in both exercises helping our infirmities and encouraging our hearts. Let us continually believe in the Holy Spirit as the true Life of all Christian effort; when we think of our ministries, let us refer them to the Spirit who gives them, and who alone can bless them; and for the many works which the Church performs, let us only look for success to attend them as the Holy Spirit is pleased to put forth His Power by them. See then, dear Friends, we are not referred to One of whom we do not know, and who is a stranger to us, but our tearful eyes are bid to look for Divine Assistance from our best and dearest Friend, from Him who though He fills Heaven itself and is God over all, blessed forever, yet makes our poor bodies to be His Temples, and dwells in the Church continually. It is said of the Holy Spirit that in our times of distress He will come to our rescue. Has it not been so with us until now? Just when Faith was fainting, the Holy Spirit feasted her upon a comfortable Promise of God, which Faith fed upon as Elijah did upon the cake baked on the coals, so that she went in the strength of that meat a 40 days' journey into the wilderness. When it appeared that our love had ebbed out till there was none of it left, the Holy Spirit came, and by revealing the glorious Person of the Lord Jesus, our soul, before it was aware, was made like the chariots of Amminadab. We thought surely no spiritual life remained in us, but the Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, came with all His Quickening Powers, and by shedding abroad a Savior's Love He instantly rekindled the flame upon the altar of our hearts. We were lifted up from lethargy to earnestness, from sloth to zealous industry. We scarcely understood how it could be

that we who groped with the mole suddenly mounted with the eagle. This is the Spirit's work; when the enemy comes in like a flood then He lifts up in our hearts a standard against him.

We have then to fall back as to our present difficulty, whatever it may be, upon spiritual power. Oh, Beloved, if the battle of Salvation were to be fought by man alone, then you and I might throw down sword and shield and despairingly give it all up, for why should we waste our exertions in fruitless toil? But when we understand that the Spirit of God has laid bare His holy arm to save us, and that He works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, we are not afraid of the worst moment in the fight, we are not dispirited concerning the blackest hour of the conflict. Let the enemy rush forward with concentrated and infuriated force; let the powers of darkness and of inward corruption advance with malignant might, there is One who is greater than they all, whose standard shall stop their onslaught. Let the evil spirit do his uttermost, for then we shall see what the Holy Spirit can do when the fullness of His Power is displayed. We cannot expect to see God at His best unless we see the devil at his worst; and when our plight becomes the most grievous, then shall our help become the most glorious; when the creature is ready to die of despair, then there shall be an opportunity for the Creator's irresistible arm to put forth its energy and to glorify itself in us.

Let us now for a minute or two take *two or three instances in which this great Truth of God is conspicuous.* This is true of a soul under conviction of sin. This is Satan's hour and opportunity with many seeking souls. When sin is heavy upon the Christian and his soul is burdened, he is very apt to be, as John Bunyan says, "Tumbled up and down in his mind," till he hardly has his right wits and senses; for the terrors of the Law are sometimes so distracting, that the poor heart which is the subject of them scarcely knows darkness from light, or light from darkness. At such a time, just when Satan knows that the creature is very weak and without courage to resist him, he comes in with some detestable suggestion, either that such a soul is appointed to everlasting destruction and to present despair, or that its sins are past forgiveness, that it has committed the unpardonable sin, or that it is not in a right state to receive Divine Mercy, is hardened, left by the Spirit, and is quite unfit to receive Divine Favor. If all these insinuations are driven out one by one, Satan has as many more. In fact, the variety of temptations with which Satan can assault a troubled, seeking soul, is as nearly infinite as possible. A wide pastoral experience has never enabled us to set any limit to the craft of Satan; for though the temptations of this state are very much the one like the other, yet in no two cases are they precisely similar, for it is a part of Satan's policy to make each man think that his case is the only one of the kind, that he is peculiar, that there is no description given of him in the Word of God, no promise meant for him—that he is one whom God did not in fact intend to bless, and therefore left him entirely out of His Word.

And this old liar, who was a murderer from the beginning, continues to pour in these horrible thoughts one after another, not distilling them like drops of poison, but as if to make sure of his prey, pouring them into

the human heart like a flood, sometimes so commingled and indistinct, that the person who is the subject of them cannot tell them to another, so that his friends may give him comfort. He is so beset, so downcast, that he is like a struggling fly in the midst of a flood that is carried on, whirled round and round in every eddy, tossed on every wave, without a hope of being rescued from the stream. Now what is to be done? The foe has fairly got possession of the field and treads it under foot, and plows it up, and dyes it with blood. What is to be done? Why, nothing can be done in such a case without the Holy Spirit's interposition. The preacher tries to comfort. He seeks out goodly words by which he may bring peace, but he is disappointed, for the case of many a soul beset with sin is the minister's bewilderment. As they used to say of certain diseases that they were the scandal of the physician, the physician could not touch them, so some soul-sicknesses are the scandal of the minister; for though we can find promises which should suit the case and do teach Doctrines which ought to give comfort, yet it is one thing to find the medicine, and quite another thing to bring the soul to receive it.

As the old proverb has it, "One man may bring a horse to the water, but 20 cannot make it drink." And one man may bring a soul to the Promise, but 20 men cannot make that Promise to be received by the soul. But oh, the joy of my text—"The Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." And that standard in your case, poor troubled Soul, will be the CROSS. He will lift up before your eyes the suffering Son of God. This is the standard that makes Hell flee. Satan knows the Power of that heel which once he bruised—the foot of Jesus has already broken his head, and he takes flight whenever God's own Son is lifted up. I beseech you, poor Sinner—and may the Holy Spirit enable you—I beseech you to look to the slaughtered Lamb of God upon Calvary's Cross. There is Atonement for sin in those sufferings, there is readiness to receive you in that pierced heart, there is cleansing, sanctifying power in that water which flows with blood from His opened side. There is nothing asked of you but to look and live; and oh, at this moment may the Holy Spirit do for you what I cannot—may He lift up that standard in your heart, that all your doubts and fears may flee at once, and the battle may be yours because Christ has taken up your cause.

I believe it will be so. You may be a long time in the darkness, but you shall not always be there. Never did a soul perish that sought the Lord with all its heart; you may be outside Mercy's door and knock, and it may be a cold wintry day, and your very fingers may get chilled as you hold the rapper, but the door must ultimately open, there is no question about that. God must un-God Himself before He can refuse a pleading sinner. If you are willing to be God's, God is willing to be yours, for He never yet turned the human will where He had not already made up His own will as to the salvation of that soul. The Spirit of the Lord will be your Helper.

Now we will suppose that there is another case present, and try and apply the text. After conversion it frequently happens, and especially to those who have been guilty of gross sin before conversion, that temptation comes in with unusual force. You must not suppose that a

man who is converted from drunkenness will never be tempted to drunkenness again. He will; that will probably be his burden for a long time. Any person who has fallen into lust will find it in his bones, and though he hates it and strives against it, yet there will be times when it will be as much as he can do and more than he could do without God's Grace to stand against it. Some of us who from the early period of our conversion were spared the grosser sins have nevertheless been tormented with very horrible temptations. I believe God sends great temptations to those of His ministers whom He means to use to comfort afflicted souls. Oh the horrible blasphemies, the infernal suggestions, the worse than hellish thoughts that some of God's servants have had to struggle with by the hour together, so that they clapped their hands to their mouths for fear such thoughts should ever be spoken. These men have hated these evil thoughts even to loathing, and have endeavored to cast them out and shake them off as Paul shook the viper from his hand into the fire, and yet they could not be rid of them. It is a dreadful thing to be tempted as some of God's best servants are tempted, for there is no Christian, let him live where he may, who will wholly escape temptations, and full often the more eminently useful, the more eminently tempted.

What then? Why, at such times look not to your own experience for strength, neither turn to your own wisdom for guidance, for then your trouble will be 10 times worse than before. Go not to these broken cisterns, for they hold no water; but I charge you, Christian, go to the strong for strength, go to the blessed Spirit who alone can effectually lift up the standard, and rally your soul anew to the conflict and give you the victory. You shall conquer through the Lamb's redeeming blood. This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith. We shall need spiritual reinforcements, and we shall have them in the time of trouble.

Another case sometimes occurs to a Christian, when it is not so much enticement to sin as temptation to doubt. What a mercy it would be if we could live without doubting! But so common are doubts and fears that Mr. John Bunyan, the greatest master of Christian experience who ever lived, in his, "Holy War," represents an army of doubters as trying to capture the city of Mansoul, and he divides them into a great number of regiments—there are the Election Doubters, the Calling Doubters, the Perseverance Doubters, and so on; and these fellows, with the great Hell drum which they kept continually beating, much alarmed the town of Mansoul, and even forced an entrance into it, and well-near took the castle of the heart itself, but they could not quite take the citadel, and were ultimately driven out. When doubts and fears prevail, do not tell me that you can get rid of them when you like. I know they are sins, and they are strong sins. I know it is a disease to doubt, but it is a disease which is very common among God's people—I wish it were not—and when these gloomy doubts prevail, there is no comfort in the heart nor joy in life—

"For oh, when gloomy doubts prevail,
I fear to call You mine,
The springs of comfort seem to fail,
And all my hopes decline."

What, then, shall we do? Why, once again fly to the Comforter, and cry, "Blessed Consoler of Your people, You whose balmy wings can bring us peace, descend!" When He works within us, and spreads abroad those wings of Love, order reigns instead of confusion. He says, "Let there be light!" And the thick darkness yields, and there is light, and our soul rejoices "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Now this is the experience, I believe, of every Christian, and it shall be your experience, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, if you can but cast yourself upon Divine Power.

I leave this Promise in its relation to our inward state, only reminding you that it is a sure and true Promise. It is one of God's "shalls," and it is a comfortable thing when you grasp a Divine "shall." "The Spirit of the Lord *shall* lift up a standard." It is as true now as when Isaiah wrote it. It is true of you; it is true in your present darkness; you shall find it true, and in Heaven you shall bear testimony that the Spirit of God does lift up the battle standard against the enemy in the day of conflict.

II. Let us now turn to the second head—THE HOLY WAR AMONG US.

The Christian Church is too conspicuous an object of Divine Love not to be the butt of the malice of the powers of darkness. From the very moment when the Church was born, Satan, like Herod, tried to destroy the young Child—and if the flames of persecution and the inventions of heresy could have destroyed the Church, she would have been destroyed long ago. There have been distinct periods all down Church history when the enemy has come in upon her, making a more than unusually terrific and effective onslaught. How terrible was the attack upon the early Church when Peter was laid in prison, James having already been slain with the sword. Herod designed to destroy the whole band of followers of the despised Nazarene, and after him the Pharisaic zeal of Saul hounded them to death. But the Spirit of God very speedily made amends for all Herod's operations, and the persecutions of the Pharisees met with a most effectual rebuff when the leader in them was himself converted, and Saul of Tarsus became Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. The spiritual power which rested upon the Church in the early ages was sufficient for her protection against the malevolence of her enemies; not only so, but it was so mighty that it made profit out of that which was for its damage. The zeal of the Church turned her persecutions into fiery chariots, in which she rode forth triumphantly to the uttermost ends of the earth. Satan stirred a series of persecutions which you who are acquainted with history will remember to have been of the most ferocious kind. These persecutions we may compare to Nebuchadnezzar's furnace when it was heated seven times hotter, but not so much as the smell of fire passed upon the Church! The game of persecution was played out, and ended in the total defeat of the persecutor, for do you not remember how the saints volunteered to die, and even panted for the martyrs' crown?

Young men came before the tribunals; young men, did I say? OLD men leaning upon their staffs, and women, and even little children came to the tribunal, and shouted that they were followers of Jesus. The prisons were crowded with Christians, and the amphitheaters glutted with their blood. The spirit of holy boldness was so abundant that the foe

was baffled, glutted with blood he turned with loathing from the murder of the inoffensive sheep which was once so great a luxury to him. The Spirit of God, by giving to Christians an indomitable courage which made them, as it were, insensible to pain and defiant of Death in his most ghastly form, lifted up a standard against the fury of the enemy. Then Satan changed his tactics, and set on that baptized heathen Constantine to profess to become a Christian; and he, for reasons of State-craft and subtle policy, made Christianity the national religion, and thus struck the most fearful blow at the heart of Christianity. The union of Church and State is a fatal blow to true religion. The king's hand wherever it falls upon the Church of Christ, brings the king's evil with it; there never was a Church whose spirituality survived it yet, and there never will be. Christ's Kingdom is not of this world, and if we try to marry the Church of Christ to a worldly kingdom we engender innumerable mischiefs.

So it happened that when the Church became outwardly glorious she became spiritually debased. Her communion table glittered with gold and silver plates, but her communion with Christ was not so golden as before. Her ministers were enriched, but their doctrine was impoverished; for every ounce of outward gold which she gained, she lost a treasure of Divine Grace. Her bishops became lords, and her flocks were famished; her humble meeting places were exchanged for grand basilicas, but the true Glory of God was departed. She became like the heathen around her, and began to set up the images of her saints and martyrs, till at last, after years of gradual declension, the Church of Rome ceased to be the Church of Christ, and that which was once nominally the Church of Christ actually became the Antichrist. Black darkness covered the lands, and dark ages set in; when instead of pardon bought with the blood of Jesus, false priests made merchandize of souls, and pardons were hawked in the streets; when, instead of deacons and elders adorned with holiness and purity, monks, and nuns, and priests, and even popes became monsters of filthiness; when instead of Justification by Faith, men proclaimed justification by pilgrimages and by penances; when the crucifix took the place of Christ Jesus, and a piece of bread was lifted up as a god, and men bowed before it, and said, "These are your gods, O Israel, that redeemed you from the wrath to come."

What was done in this emergency? All through that long, long period of darkness the Spirit of God lifted up a standard among the faithful few. Up yonder on the snow-clad Alps, and down deep in the secluded valleys of Piedmont, the Lord kept alive the "two witnesses" for the Truth; the Albigenses and Waldenses, hunted like partridges upon the mountains, were God's standard-bearers, and maintained that unbroken line of true Apostolic succession from which we date our succession, a succession infinitely purer than the Tractarian chain of infamous prelates and Popish priests. The Spirit of God maintained the living Church in the day of her obscurity in France, Hungary, Bohemia, Switzerland, and other regions, till at last the men came whom Jehovah had ordained most greatly to bless; the nations rejoiced at the coming of Luther and his great allies, Zwingli and Calvin. What a lifting up of the standard was

then seen, my Brothers and Sisters! They said that Luther's words were carried on the wings of angels, for the sermon which he preached today was dispersed by means of the printing press; so that tomorrow heard it thundering along the foot of the Apennines, and old Rome itself trembled at the voice of the monk of Germany. Then God lifted up a standard in England, and our glorious old Hugh Latimer, with simple and rough speech rebuked kings, and spoke the Truth of God in the presence of the mighty; and up there in Scotland John Knox published the Gospel of Jesus with all the energy of his fiery nature. The Spirit of God lifted up the Cross, and, like the sound of a clarion, a voice was heard resounding over hill and dale, "By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified." "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

It is not necessary that I should tell the tale how, in succeeding years, throughout England Christianity had declined to the verge of death; when drunken parsons polluted the pulpits, and were zealous in nothing but in feasting and fox-hunting; when Dissenting ministers were either semi-Socinian or else so orthodox as not to care whether men's souls were saved or damned; then, again, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard. Six young men were expelled from Oxford for praying, and these men, driven sorely against their will to uncanonical action, began to preach in the open air. Crowds in London gathered at Moorfield and Kennington; the Kingswood miners caught the flame of Divine Grace; Cornwall, far away, began to blaze with spiritual fervor; the uttermost ends of our island perceived that God the Holy Spirit had visited us, that the "Daystar from on high" was shining again! The name of "Methodist" was the terror of Satan and the joy of the Church—

"See how great a flame aspires,
Kindled by a spark of Grace!
Jesus' love the nations fire,
Sets the kingdoms on a blaze."

Then men knew that the blessed Spirit of the living God had appeared and lifted up a standard against false doctrine and sin.

Dear Friends, I am not giving you this history for the mere purpose of detailing it, but with a practical end. I believe that no exaggeration would be possible as to the present unhappy condition of certain sections of the Christian Church. The enemy is, indeed, coming in like a flood. This time the peril is within the visible Church, itself. We have High Church—what is it but bastard Popery!? We have Broad Church—what is it but dishonest Infidelity!?—An infidelity which takes the pay of a church whose foundations it labors to undermine. These two powers are advancing at present like two armies in victorious march. They are sweeping everything before them. Our timid and weak hearted Evangelical friends have been so long accustomed to submit, that they have little stomach for the fight. They have acted so miserable a part in the great conflict, that the power they once possessed has been taken from them, and they are a pitiable instance of the weakening effect of accustoming one's tongue to the use of language against which the conscience revolts. They are not now a part in the calculation; their friends and their foes alike know their utter unfitness for the battle. He

who hopes that the battle of Protestantism will be fought by the Evangelicals, trusts in a broken reed. I only wish I could think otherwise, but I cannot. What is to be done? I discern no sign of help from any quarter but from above. It is our hope that the Holy Spirit will now interpose and save His Church. This is a dark hour, and now will He show His strength. We have now no desire that the bishops should interfere with the Ritualists—they have let them tamper with the Church so long that everybody asks what is the use of bishops? Alas for the Church of God if the bishops were the only guardians! Even the interference of Parliament will avail little; let Parliament look after politics and leave religion alone. What we need is something superior to bishops and Parliament—we need the Holy Spirit, and if the Holy Spirit will take the matter in hand, He will make very short work with all this imitation of Romanism.

But how will it be done? I think I see the beginning of it. A general spirit of prayer will come over those Churches which are faithful. Already it is descending. Almost in every quarter the spirit of devotion is increasing. Our Brethren in London have appointed, as you know, the fifth of November, to be spent by all the ministers, deacons, and Elders of our Churches as a day of fasting and prayer to entreat the Lord's blessing upon the universal Church. I find our friends are to do the same in Birmingham, and in most of the large towns; and all this has come without any dictation from anyone, indeed we have no power to dictate in our denomination, it has come spontaneously, the Brethren moving towards one another as by a common instinct, coming together in the time of danger. I think I perceive among Christians, generally, the relinquishment of controversy about minor points, and a determination for union about the one great thing. We feel that we must stand together, shoulder to shoulder, as a solid unit in this day of conflict, and fight with heavenly weapons, or else it will go ill with us. We feel we must cry to God, for no one else can help us. With this spirit of prayer I believe there is returning to us in the Church—I may be optimistic, but I think I see it—a deeper love to the old Truths of God than there used to be.

Do not my Brothers in the ministry preach more of Christ than they once did? Are they not tired of philosophical essays, and returning to the simple Truths of God? They are no longer teasing us with Genesis and geology, but give us more of Christ on the Cross. We know that preaching science and ethics instead of the Gospel is all wrong, and our Brothers see that it is so. It was but the other day I heard a Wesleyan minister stating that the reason why they had, to a great extent, lost a blessing for the last few years, was because they had not given enough prominence to the Doctrines of Grace, and he pointed to this House of Prayer, and the prosperity that God gives to this Church, as an indication that if Christ is preached and nothing but Christ, and if Salvation by Blood is the one staple theme, there is no fear of there being hearers, nor of there being converts, for the old standard, whenever it is uplifted, brings victory with it. You have only to let the standard of Christ's Truth be opened to the breeze, and the battle is ours. Now I think I can see that the Spirit of God

is lifting up this standard. There is more Gospel preaching, more earnest declaration of Christ in England than there has been for many a day.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, as the Spirit begins, let us follow. What is a standard lifted up for but for every soldier to rally to it? Press where you see it displayed to the wind! Press to it, every man among you! The soldier does not look at a standard as being a place *from* which he is to march, but *around* which he is to rally in the day when it is in danger. Every man must do his duty now in the Christian Church, and count it a privilege to do it. You must scatter the Gospel; you must tell it with your lips; you must pray for it with your hearts; you must distribute it as it is printed! Do all you can to increase the sale of sound Gospel literature, but use your own mouths, also, to tell of the Savior's Love. Every man now to his post today, for *now* must we awake out of sleep. Oh, if the Holy Spirit will but visit us now, we need not fear concerning old Rome. Like chaff before the wind, the foes shall fly, they shall be driven like thin clouds before a Biscay gale. When once God comes into the fight, woe unto you who are His enemies! Woe unto you! You may fight like mighty men, but you know the might of Israel's sword in ancient times, and you shall feel it now.

Soldiers of Jesus, never despair! My Brothers and Sisters, do not fear! Be of good courage! Be confident! God is on our side. "Immanuel"—let that be your watchword—"God with us—Immanuel." Be very courageous and very earnest, and the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard when the enemy comes in like a flood. God grant it for His name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 59.

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PRAYING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT
NO. 719

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 4, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Praying in the Holy Spirit."
Jude 1:20.

THESE words occur in a passage where the Apostle is indicating the contrast between the ungodly and the godly. The ungodly are mocking, speaking great swelling words, and walking after their ungodly lusts, while the righteous are building themselves up in their most holy faith, and keeping themselves in the love of God. The ungodly are showing the venom of their hearts by mourning and complaining, while the righteous are manifesting the new principle within them by "praying in the Holy Spirit." The ungodly man bears wormwood in his mouth, while the Christian's lips drop with the virgin honey of devotion. As the spider is said to find poison in the very flowers from which the bees suck honey, so do the wicked abuse to sin the same mercies which the godly use to the Glory of God. As far as light is removed from darkness, and life from death, so far does a Believer differ from the ungodly. Let us keep this contrast very vivid. While the wicked grow yet more wicked, let us become more holy, more prayerful, and more devout, saying with good old Joshua, "Let others do as they will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Observe that the text comes in a certain order in the context. The righteous are described, first of all, as building themselves up in their most holy faith. Faith is the first Divine Grace, the root of piety, the foundation of holiness, the dawn of godliness; to this must the first care be given. But we must not tarry at the first principles. Onward is our course. What then follows at the heels of faith? What is faith's first-born child? When the vine of faith becomes vigorous and produces fruit unto holiness, which is the first ripe cluster? Is it not prayer—"praying in the Holy Spirit"? That man has no faith who has no prayer, and the man who abounds in faith will soon abound in supplication. Faith the mother and Prayer the child are seldom apart from one another; Faith carries Prayer in her arms, and Prayer draws life from the breast of Faith. Edification in faith leads to fervency in supplication. Elijah first manifests his faith before the priests of Baal, and then retires to wrestle with God upon Carmel. Study our text carefully, and see what follows after "praying in the Holy Spirit." "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Next to prayer comes an abiding sense of the love of God to us and the flowing up of our love towards God. Prayer builds an altar and lays the sacrifice and the wood in order, and then love, like the priest, brings holy fire from Heaven and sets the offering in a blaze. Faith is, as we have said, the root of Grace, prayer is the lily's stalk, and love is the spotless flower. Faith sees

the Savior, Prayer follows Him into the house, but Love breaks the alabaster box of precious ointment and pours it on His head.

There is, however, a step beyond even the hallowed enjoyments of love, there remains a topstone to complete the edifice; it is believing expectantly—"looking for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto Eternal Life." Far-seeing Hope climbs the staircase which Faith has built, and bowing upon the knees of Prayer looks through the window which Love has opened, and sees the Lord Jesus Christ coming in His Glory and endowing all His people with the Eternal Life which is to be their portion. See then the value of prayer as indicating the possession of faith, and as foreshadowing and supporting the strength and growth of love.

Coming directly to the text, we remark that the Apostle speaks of prayer, but he mentions only one kind of praying. Viewed from a certain point, prayers are of many sorts. I suppose that no two genuine prayers from different men could be precisely alike. Master artists do not often multiply the same painting; they prefer to give expression to fresh ideas as often as they grasp the pencil, and so the Master Artist, the Holy Spirit, who is the Author of prayer, does not often produce two prayers that shall be precisely the same upon the tablets of His people's hearts. Prayers may be divided into several different orders. There is *deprecatory* prayer in which we ward off the Wrath of God, and entreat Him to turn away His fierce anger, to withdraw His rod, to sheath His sword. Deprecatory prayers are to be offered in all times when calamity is to be feared, and when sin has provoked the Lord to jealousy. Then there are *supplicatory* prayers, in which we beg for blessings and entreat mercies from the liberal hand of God, and entreat our heavenly Father to supply our needs out of His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus. There are prayers which are personal in which the supplicant pleads mainly concerning himself, and there are pleadings which are intercessory, in which like Abraham, the petitioner intercedes for Sodom, or entreats that Ishmael might live before God. These prayers for others are to be multiplied as much as prayers for ourselves, lest we make the Mercy Seat to become a place for the exhibition of spiritual selfishness. The prayer may be public or private, vocal or mental, protracted or short. Prayer may be salted with confession, or perfumed with thanksgiving; it may be sung to music, or wept out with groans. As many as are the flowers of summer, so many are the varieties of prayer.

But while prayers are of these various orders, there is one respect in which they are all one if they are acceptable with God—they must be every one of them "in the Holy Spirit." That prayer which is not in the Holy Spirit is in the flesh; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and we are told that they who are in the flesh cannot please God. All that comes of our corrupt nature is defiled and marred, and cannot be acceptable with the most holy God. If the heavens are not pure in His sight, how shall those prayers which are born of the earth be acceptable with Him? The seed of acceptable devotion must come from Heaven's storehouse. Only the prayer which comes from God can go to God. The dove will only

bear a letter to the cote from which it came, and so will prayer go back to Heaven if it came from Heaven. We must shoot the Lord's arrows back to Him. That desire which He writes upon our heart will move His heart and bring down a blessing, but the desires of the flesh have no power with Him.

Desirous to press this great Truth of God upon the minds of my Brothers and Sisters this morning, I shall use the few words of the text in five ways.

I. First we shall use the text as A CRUCIBLE to try our prayers in. I beseech you examine yourselves with rigorous care. Use the text as a refining pot, a furnace, a touchstone, or a crucible by which to discern whether your prayers have been true or not, for this is the test, have they been in very deed "praying in the Holy Spirit"?

Brothers and Sisters, we need not judge those who pray unintelligible prayers, prayers in a foreign tongue, prayers which they do not understand—we know without a moment's discussion of the question that the prayer which is not understood cannot be a prayer in the Spirit, for even the man's own spirit does not enter into it, how then can the Spirit of God be there? The mysterious words or Latin jargon of the Catholic priests cannot come up before God with acceptance. Let us therefore keep our judgment for ourselves. There may be those present who have been in the habit of using from their infancy a *form of prayer*. You perhaps would not dare to go out to your day's business without having repeated that form at the bedside; you would be afraid to fall asleep at night without going through the words which you have set yourselves to repeat. My dear Friends, may I put the question to you, will you try to answer it honestly, Have you prayed in the Holy Spirit? Has the Holy Spirit had anything to do with that form? Has He really made you to feel it in your heart? Is it not possible that you have mocked God with a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue? Is it not probable that from the random manner in which one comes to repeat a well-known form that there may be no heart whatever in it, and not an atom of sincerity?

Does not God abhor the sacrifice where the heart is not found? It would be an unholy thing if we had increased our sins by our prayers. It would be a very unhappy fact if it should turn out that when we have bowed the knee in what we thought to be the service of God, we were actually insulting the God of Heaven by uttering words which could not but be disgusting to Him because our hearts did not go with our lips. Let us rest assured that if for 70 years we have punctually performed our devotions by the use of the book, or of the form which we have learned, we may the whole 70 years never once have prayed at all, and the whole of that period we may have been living in God's esteem an ungodly, prayerless life, because we have never worshipped God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth, and have never prayed in the Holy Spirit! Judge yourselves, Brothers and Sisters, that you be not judged.

But are there not others of us who never did use a written prayer, who from our earliest childhood have avoided and even abhorred forms of

prayer, who nevertheless have good reason to judge our prayer just as much as others? We have given forth *extemporaneous utterances,* and those extemporaneous utterances necessarily required some little exercise of the mind, some little attention, but still we may have been heartless in them. I suppose we are well aware that we can get into such a habit of extemporaneous prayer that it is really very little or no better than if we repeated what we had learned. There may be such a fluency acquired by practice that one's speech may ripple on for five or ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, and yet the heart may be wandering in vanity or stagnant in indifference. The body may be on its knees, but the soul on its wings far away from the Mercy Seat.

Let us examine how far our public prayers have been in the Holy Spirit. The preacher standing here begs God to search him in that matter. If he has merely discharged the business of public prayer because it is his official duty to conduct the devotions of the congregation, he has much to account for before God; to lead the devotions of this vast throng without seeking the aid of the Holy Spirit is no little sin. And what shall be said of the prayers at Prayer Meetings? Are not many of them mere words? It were better if our friends would not speak at all rather than speak in the flesh. I am sure that the only prayer in which the devout hearer can unite, and which is acceptable with God, is that which really is a heart prayer, a soul prayer, in fact, a prayer which the *Holy Spirit* moves us to pray. All else is beating the air, and occupying time in vain. My Brothers and Sisters, I thank God that there are so many of you in connection with this Church who are gifted in prayer, and I wish that every member of every Christian Church could pray in public. You should all try to do so, and none of you should give it up unless it becomes an absolute impossibility; but oh, my Brothers and Sisters who pray in public, may it not be sometimes with you as with others of us—the exercise of gift and not the outflow of Divine Grace? And if so, ask the Lord to forgive you of such praying, and enable you to wait upon Him in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We may not forget to scrutinize our more private prayers, our supplications at the family altar, and above all, our prayers in that little room which we have dedicated to communion with God. O Brothers and Sisters, we might well be sick of our prayers if we did but see what poor things they are! There are times when it is a sweet and blessed thing to lay hold of the horns of the altar, and to feel that the blood which sprinkles the altar has sprinkled you, that you have spoken to God and prevailed. Oh it is a blessed thing to grasp the Angel of the Covenant, and to wrestle with Him even hour after hour, saying, "I will not let You go except You bless me!" But I fear these are not constant things; we may say of them that they are angels' visits, few and far between. Come, my Brethren, put your prayers into this crucible of "praying in the Holy Spirit." You will cast in much metal, but there will come out little of fine gold. Come, and lay your prayers upon this threshing floor, and thresh them with this text, "praying in the Holy Spirit." And oh, how much of straw and of chaff will there be, and how little of the well-winnowed

grain! Come, and look through this window at the fields of our devotions, overgrown with nettles, and briars, and thistles, a wilderness of merely outward performances; and how small that little spot, enclosed by Grace, which God the Holy Spirit Himself has cleared, and dug, and planted, from which the fruit of prayer has been brought forth unto perfection!

May our heavenly Father teach us to be humble in His Presence, as we reflect how little even of our best things will stand the test of His searching eyes, and may those of us who are His saints come to Him afresh, and ask Him to fill us with His Spirit, and to accept us in His Son.

II. We shall next use the text as A CORDIAL. It is a very delightful reflection to the Christian mind that God observes His people, and does not sit as an indifferent spectator of their conflicts and difficulties. For instance, He closely observes us in our prayers. He knows that prayer, while it should be the easiest thing in the world, is not so; He knows that we erring ones find it not always easy to approach Him in the true spirit of supplication, and He observes this with condescending compassion. That is a precious verse for those hearts which are very weak and broken, "He knows our frame: He remembers that we are dust," and that other, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them who fear Him." He takes notice of our frailties and of our failures in the work of supplication, He sees His child fall as it tries to walk, and marks the tears with which it bemoans its weakness. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry."

A sweeter thought remains in the text, namely, that having considered these failures of ours, which are many of them sinful, our Lord is not angry with us on account of them, but instead of being turned to wrath He is moved to pity for us and love towards us. Instead of saying, "If you cannot pray, you shall not have; if you have not Grace enough even to ask aright, I will shut the gates of Mercy against you," He devises means by which to bring the lame and the banished into His Presence; He teaches the ignorant how to pray, and strengthens the weak with His own Strength. Herein He also does wonders, for the means whereby He helps our infirmity are exceedingly to be marveled at. That help is not to be found in a book or in the dictation of certain words in certain consecrated places, but *in the condescending assistance of God Himself,* for who is He that is spoken of in the text but God? The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the adorable Trinity, helps our infirmities, making intercession for us with groans that cannot be uttered. It is a mark of wondrous condescension that God should not only answer our prayers when they are made, but should make our prayers for us. That the King should say to the petitioner, "Bring your case before me, and I will grant your desire," is kindness, but for him to say, "I will be your secretary, I will write out your petition for you, I will put it into proper words and use fitting phrases so that your petition shall be framed acceptably," this is goodness at its utmost stretch; and this is precisely what the Holy Spirit does for us poor, ignorant, wavering, weak sons of men. I am to understand from the expression, "praying in the Holy Spirit," that the

Holy Spirit is actually willing to help me to pray, that He will tell me how to pray, and that when I get to a point where I am at a pause and cannot express my desires, He will appear in my extremity and make intercession in me with groans which cannot be uttered. Jesus in His agony was strengthened by an angel, you are to be succored by God Himself. Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses, but the Holy Spirit Himself helps your infirmities!

My beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, the thought needs no garnishing of oratorical expressions; take it as a wedge of gold of Ophir and value it, it is priceless, beyond all price. God Himself, the Holy Spirit, condescends to assist you when you are on your knees, and if you cannot put two words together in common speech to men, yet He will help you to speak with God; ah, and if at the Mercy Seat you fail in words, you shall not fail in reality, for your heart shall conquer. God needs not words. He never reads our petitions according to the outward utterance, but according to the inward groans. He notices the longing, the desiring, the sighing, the crying. Remember that the outward of prayer is but the shell, the inward of prayer is its true kernel and essence. If prayer is wafted to Heaven in the song of the multitude, with the swell of glorious music, it is not one whit more acceptable to God than when it is wailed forth in the bitter cry of anguish from a desolate spirit. That cry so disagreeable to human ears is music to the ears of God—

"To Him there's music in a sigh,
And beauty in a tear."

Notice this, then, and be comforted.

III. The text may further serve as A CHART to direct us in the way of prayer. Here I shall need to speak at greater length. Praying how? By the book? Without a book? In public? In private? By the way? In the house? On your knees? Standing? Sitting? Kneeling? Nothing is said about these; posture, place, and time are all left open. There is no order except one—*"in the Holy Spirit."* That is indispensable. That granted, nothing else matters one whit. If it is praying in the Holy Spirit, all else may be as you will. What does praying in the Holy Spirit mean? The word may be translated, "*by* the Holy Spirit," or, "*through* the Holy Spirit," as well as, "*in* the Holy Spirit," and the phrase means, first, *praying in the Holy Spirit's Power*. The carnal mind knows nothing about this. I might as well express myself in high Dutch as in English upon this point to an unregenerate man; but regenerate men who are born of the Spirit, and live in the Spirit world are cognizant of communications between their spirits and the Holy Spirit who is now resident in the midst of the Church of God. We know that the Divine Spirit, without the use of sounds, speaks in our hearts, that without an utterance which the ears can hear He can make our soul know His Presence and understand His meaning. He casts the spiritual shadow of His Influence over us, coloring our thoughts and feelings according to His own design and will. It is a great spiritual fact which the Christian knows for certain that the Holy Spirit, the Divine Spirit, has frequent dealings with spiritual minds, and imparts to them His Power. Our new-born spirit has a certain degree of

power in it, but the power is never fully manifested or drawn out except when the Spirit of God quickens our spirit and excites it to activity.

Our spirit prays, but it is because it is overshadowed and filled with the Power of the Holy Spirit. I cannot just now explain myself, but I mean this, that if I, as a man, could go to the Throne of Grace and only pray as my fleshy nature would pray, that prayer would be unacceptable; but when I go to the Mercy Seat and my new nature prays as the Holy Spirit enables me to pray, then my prayer will succeed with God. If I do before God at the Throne what flesh and blood can do and no more, I have done nothing, for that which is of the flesh still mounts no higher than flesh; but if, in coming before the Throne of the Heavenly Grace, God's Eternal Spirit speaks to my soul and lifts it out of the dead level of fallen humanity, and brings it up to be filled with Divine Force, if that Spirit is in me a well of water springing up unto Everlasting Life, if I receive that Divine Light and Power of the Holy Spirit, and if in His Power I fervently draw near to God, my prayer must be prevalent with God! This Power may be possessed by every Christian. May God grant it to all of His people now, that they may all pray in the Spirit! That, I think, is one meaning of the text—praying in the Power of the Spirit.

No doubt the principal sense of the text is praying in the Spirit *as to matter*. We do not always know what to pray for, and, Brothers and Sisters, if we were to refrain from prayer for a few minutes till we did know, it would be a good and wise rule. The habit into which we have fallen in extemporaneous praying of always praying directly when we are asking, without an instant's pause in which to think of what we are going to ask, is very prejudicial to the spirit of prayer. I would like, when I am alone, to take a few minutes to consider what I am going to ask of God, for otherwise it seems to me to be like seeking an interview with one of the officers of State to ask for something which might occur to us at the moment. How would you like to have an audience with Lord Derby, and then consider all of a sudden what it was you had come for? Surely common sense would say, Tarry awhile till you have your case mapped out in your own mind, and then when you clearly know yourself what it is you want, you will be able to ask for what you need. Should we not wait upon God in prayer, asking Him to reveal to us what those matters are concerning which we should plead with Him? Beware of hit-or-miss prayers. Never make haphazard work of supplication. Come to the Throne of Grace intelligently understanding what it is that you require.

It is well with us in prayer when the Holy Spirit guides the mind. Are not all spiritual men conscious of this, that they feel themselves shut up as to certain matters, and only free in another direction; then let them obey the Holy Spirit and pray as He directs, for He knows what should be our petition. Well, then what? My dear Brothers and Sisters, pray for that which God the Spirit moves you to pray for, and be very sensitive of the Holy Spirit's influence. I like a metaphor used by Thomas Shillitoe in his *Life*, when he says he wished his own mind to be like a cork upon the water, conscious of every motion of the Spirit of God. It were well to be so sensitive of the Spirit of God, that His faintest breath would cause a

ripple upon the sea of our soul, and make it move as the Spirit would have it. We have reached a high state of Sanctification when God the Spirit and our own inward spirit are perfectly in accord. May we be led into that unspeakably blessed state! We do not pray aright if we think what it is *we* want and *we* wish for, and then ask for it in selfish willfulness; but we pray aright when we consent to that which is the mind of the Spirit, and speak as He moves us to speak. We shall surely be enriched with good things when we wait for the very matter of our supplications to have it all from Him. Lord, teach us to pray. Put the thoughts into our minds, the desires into our hearts, and the very words into our lips, if it is Your will, so that all our prayers may be praying in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

The main part of praying in the Spirit must lie not merely in the Spirit's Power, or in the Spirit's teaching us the matter, but in the Spirit's assisting us *in the manner.* Observe, Brothers and Sisters, the many ways there are of praying which are obnoxious to God; observe them and avoid them. There is but one manner of praying which the Lord accepts. You know what it is; I will briefly describe its attributes. He who comes to God must remember that He is "a Spirit, and that they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him." The very first essential of prayer is to pray in *truth*, and we do not pray in truth unless the Spirit of God leads our vain minds into the sincerity and reality of devotion. To pray in truth, is this—it is not to use the empty expression of prayer, but to mean what we say; it is for the heart to agonize with God and heave with strong desires, and where will you obtain such a manner of prayer except in the spiritual man, when moved by the Holy Spirit? The carnal man, if he is foolish enough, can intone a prayer; the carnal man can "read the office," and "do duty" as well as anybody else who can read a book, but he is not praying; no prayer can come from him. Only the *spiritual* man can sigh and long, and cry in his inmost heart, and in the chamber of his soul before God, but he will not do it except as the Spirit of Truth leads him in sincerity into the secret of heart prayer.

Praying in the Holy Spirit is praying in *fervency*. Cold prayers, my Brothers and Sisters, ask the Lord not to hear them! Those who do not plead with fervency, plead not at all. As well speak of lukewarm fire as of lukewarm prayer; it is essential that it be red hot. Real prayer is burnt as with hot iron into a man's soul, and then comes forth from the man's soul like coals of juniper which have a most vehement heat. Such prayers none but the Holy Spirit can give. I have heard from this spot prayers which I never can forget, nor will you ever forget them either. Last January and February there were times when certain of our Brethren were helped to pray with such power that we were bowed down in humiliation, and afterwards borne up as on the wings of eagles in the power of supplication. There is a way of praying with power in which a man seems to get hold of the posts of Heaven's gate, as Samson grasped the pillars of the temple, and appears as though he would pull all down upon himself sooner than miss the blessing. It is a brave thing for the

heart to vow, "I will not let You go except You bless me." That is praying in the Holy Spirit. May we be tutored in the art of offering effectual fervent prayer!

Next to that, it is essential in prayer that we should pray *perseveringly*. Any man can run fast at a spurt, but to keep it up mile after mile, there is the battle. And so, certain hot spirits can pray very fervently every now and then, but to continue in prayer—who shall do this except the Spirit of God sustains him? Mortal spirits flag and tire. The course of mere fleshly devotion is as the course of a snail which melts as it crawls. Carnal minds go onward and their devotion grows small by degrees and miserably less, as they cry out, "What a weariness it is!" But when the Holy Spirit fills a man and leads him into prayer, he gathers force as he proceeds, and grows more fervent even when God delays to answer. The longer the gate is closed the more vehemently does he use the knocker, till he thunders in his prayer; and the longer the Angel lingers the more resolved is he that if he grasps Him with a death grip he will never let Him go without the blessing. Beautiful in God's sight is tearful and yet unconquerable importunity. Jesus delights to be laid hold of by one who says, "I cannot take No for an answer, this blessing I must have, for You have promised it and You have taught me to ask for it, and I will not believe that You can belie yourself." Surely we must have the Holy Spirit to help us thus to pray.

Praying in the Spirit we shall be sure to pray in a *holy* frame of mind. Brothers and Sisters, do you ever get distracted in your minds? "Ah," you say, "I wonder when I am not." I will venture to say that you have come into this house burdened, and yet on the road you were saying, "This is a blessed Sunday, I feel I have God's Presence." Then some silly gossip met you on the steps, and told you an idle tale which distracted you. You may even get quietly seated here, and then the recollection of a child at home, or the remembrance of what somebody said about six weeks ago will perplex your mind so that you cannot pray. But when the Holy Spirit comes, He takes a scourge of small cords and drives these buyers and sellers out of the Temple and leaves it clear for God, and then you can come with a holy, devout frame of mind, fixed and settled in your great object of approach to God. This is to approach Him in the Spirit. Oh for more of this blessed, undisturbed devotion!

I could not, however, finish the description of praying in the Spirit if I did not say that it means praying *humbly*, for the Holy Spirit never puffs us up with pride. He is the Spirit that convicts of sin, and so bows us down in contrition and brokenness of spirit. We must pray before God like the humble publican, or we shall never go forth justified as he was. We shall never sing *Gloria in Excelsis* except we pray to God *De Profundis;* out of the depths must we cry, or we shall never see the Glory in the highest.

True prayer must be *loving* prayer if it is praying in the Holy Spirit. Prayer should be perfumed with love, saturated with love; love to our fellow saints, and love to Christ. Moreover, it must be a prayer full of *faith*. The effectual fervent prayer of a man prevails only as he believes in

God, and the Holy Spirit is the Author of faith in us, and nurtures and strengthens it so that we pray believing God's Promises. Oh that this blessed combination of excellent Graces, priceless and sweet as the spices of the merchant, might be fragrant within us because the Holy Spirit's Power is shed abroad in our hearts! Time fails me, therefore I must dispense with a full description of what praying in the Holy Spirit is, but I hope you will possess it and so understand it.

IV. Fourthly, I shall use the text as A CHERUB to proclaim our success in prayer. Praying in the Spirit—blessed words! Then with such prayer it is an absolute certainty that I must succeed with God in prayer. If my prayer were my own prayer, I might not be so sure of it. But if the prayer which I utter is God's own prayer written on my soul, God is always One with Himself, and what He writes on the heart is only written there because it is written in His purposes. It is said by an old Divine that prayer is the shadow of Omnipotence. Our will, when God the Holy Spirit influences it, is the indicator of God's will. When God's people pray, it is because the blessing is coming, and their prayers are the shadow of the coming blessing. Rest assured of this, Brothers and Sisters, God never did belie Himself, He never contradicted in one place what He said in another. You and I may contradict ourselves, not only through untruthfulness, but even through infirmity; we may not be able to stand up to our word, and we may forget what we said, and so in another place may say something that contradicts it, but God is neither infirm as to memory, nor yet changeable as to will; what He promised yesterday He fulfills today, and what He said in one place, He declares in another. Then if God said in my heart, "Pray for So-and-So," it is because He has said it in the Book of His Decrees. The Spirit of God's writing in the heart always tallies with the writing of destiny in the Book of God's Eternal Purpose. Rest assured that you cannot but succeed when you have laid your soul like a sheet of paper before the Lord, and asked Him to write upon it; then it is no more your own prayer, merely, but the Spirit making intercession in you according to the Will of God.

At such time you need not say, "I hope God will answer the prayer." He will do it—He is pledged to do it. It is a kind of infidelity to say, "I do not know whether the Lord is true to His promise or not, but I hope He is." He is true; let God be true and every man a liar. Oh, if more of you tried Him as some of us have been compelled to do, you would have to hold up your hands in astonishment, and say, "Truly, whatever else is not a fact, it *is* a fact that God, who sits in the highest heavens, listens to the cries of His people, and gives them according to the desire of their hearts." If the Spirit teaches you to pray, it is as certain as two times two make four, that God will give you what you are seeking for.

V. Then I will use the text in conclusion as A CHARIOT in which to convey our own souls onward in the delightful exercise of prayer. The exercise allotted to us today and tomorrow is that of praying in the Spirit. Brothers and Sisters, it is delightful to some of us to believe that the Spirit of God is the Author of the great wave of prayer now breaking over the Churches to which we belong. It was not of our devising or planning,

but it was the motion of God's Holy Spirit upon a few Brethren who desired to spend a day in solemn prayer, and found such blessing in it that they could not but tell others of it; that then others spontaneously moved, and without a word of opposition or difference of opinion all said, "Amen; let us also meet together for prayer." The spirit of brotherly kindness, unanimity and love was given to our denomination, and then a spirit of earnest desire to bring down a blessing from God. We have known the time when it was not so. We have known the time when a day of fasting and prayer, if not despised, at any rate would not have been appreciated as it will be now. We are of one heart in this matter, and I know from communications with many Christians, that many of God's people already feel as if they were peculiarly in prayer, as if it were no effort now to pray, but as if it were their very breath now to breathe out longing desires for the revival of saints and the ingathering of sinners.

Brothers and Sisters of this Church, you have had God's Presence for many years, you have been favored with much of "praying in the Holy Spirit," and seen with your own eyes the great things God has done in answer to supplication. Will one of you draw back now? Will there be one man or woman today or tomorrow who will not be earnest in prayer? Will one man, woman, or even one child in union with this Church, be lukewarm in prayer? I would say, Sin not against the Lord by abstaining from going up to the Mercy Seat with your Brothers and Sisters. Offend not the Lord so that He deprive you of the blessing because you deprive yourself of joining in the exercise. My dear Friends, it was when they were all met together with one accord in one place, that suddenly they heard the sound as of a rushing, mighty wind. We cannot be all in one place, but, at any rate, let us be all with one accord. What? Do you say you have nothing to pray for? What? No children unconverted, no friends unsaved, no neighbors who are still in darkness? What? Live in London and not pray for sinners? Where do you live? Is it in some vast wilderness, amidst "some continuous mass of shade," where rumor of sin and of ignorance has never reached your ear? No, you are living in the midst of millions of ungodly millions, of millions who despise the God who made them, who despise the Gospel of Christ—of millions, not thousands—hear that word and see if you can tell its meaning; *millions* who are living without God and without hope, and are going down to Hell.

We have, throughout the realm, too, dangerous mischiefs spreading; need I continually remind you of them—infidelity wearing the miter, and Popery usurping the place of Protestantism. You are assailed by the wolf and the lion, the serpent and the bear; all forms of mischief are coming forth to attack the Church. Not pray? If you pray not, shall I say, May you smart for your negligence? No, I dare not in the slightest shade speak as though I invoked a woe upon you, but the woe will come upon you, depend upon it! If I say it not, yet will God say it at this present hour, "Curse you Meroz, said the Lord, because they came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." We are not asking you to contribute of your wealth in this case. If we did the Lord

Jesus has a right to it, and you should freely give it; neither are we asking you all this day to preach, if we did, some of you might be excused for lack of ability; but we claim your prayers, and must not be denied. Not able to pray? Then are you graceless, Christless, hopeless, lost, and I will not ask you to join with us, but ask you first to go to God for yourselves. But if you are a Christian you can pray. Poverty does not make you poor in prayer, lack of education need not hinder you upon your knees, lack of position and rank in society will be no encumbrance to you when you deal with God, who hears the poor man when he cries and answers him with an abundance of Divine Grace.

Brothers and Sisters, if you love Christ, if you ever felt His Love shed abroad in your heart, if you have been washed in His blood, if you have been saved from the Wrath of God through Him, if you are new creatures in Him, if you hope to see His face with acceptance at the last, I might put it to you as a demand, but I press it upon you as a brotherly entreaty, join with us in praying in the Holy Spirit. Shall one start back? Take heed then, if you refuse to unite with your Brothers and Sisters in prayer, lest when you choose to cry you should find yourself straitened and shut up in prison. Beware, lest by refusing to pray now that the Spirit of God has come, you afterwards feel yourself deprived of the comfortable Presence of the Holy Spirit, and find the sweetness of devotion to have departed from you.

The Lord send a blessing. He must send it, our hearts will break if He does not; we feel that it is coming; we have grasped the Promise, we have pleaded with Jehovah; we have pleaded the blood of Jesus; we are pleading it now; we mean to continue in such pleading till the blessing comes, and we may rely upon it that the heavenly shower will soon descend. He has not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek you My face in vain." Brothers and Sisters, be hopeful, and let us unanimously join in praying in the Holy Spirit.

May the Lord bless you, dear Friends, in this respect for Jesus' sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

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DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 11, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them."
Luke 5:17.

LUKE, the writer of this Gospel, was a physician, and therefore had a quick eye for cases of disease and instances of cure; you can trace throughout the whole of his Gospel the hand of one who was skilled in surgery and medicine. I gather from this that whatever may be our calling, or in whatever art or science we may have attained proficiency, we should take care to use our knowledge for Christ; and that if we are called being physicians we may understand the work of the Lord Jesus all the better by what we see in our own work, and we may also do much for our Lord in real substantial usefulness among our patients. Let no man despise his calling; whatever instrument of usefulness God has put into your hands, consider that the Great Captain knew what weapons were best for you to wield. Covet not your neighbor's sword or spear, but use that which your Lord has given you, and go forth to the battle of life to serve according to your capacity. If you are placed in this corner of the vineyard or that, consider that you are in the best place for yourself and the best place for your Master; and do not always be judging what your fellow servants ought to do in *their* place, nor what you could do if you were in another place; but see what it is that you can do where you are, and use such things as you have in glorifying your Lord and Master.

One is pleased to observe in the language of a true man how the man's self shows itself. David frequently sings like one who had been a shepherd boy, and though a king he is not ashamed to admit that he once grasped the crook. There is a manifest difference between the prophecies of Amos the herdsman and of Isaiah the royal Seer. True men do not imitate one another, but each one, moved of God, speaks according to his native bias, and according to the circumstances in which Providence has cast him. It was destructive to Egyptian art when the great men of the land framed articles of taste, and laws of statuary and of painting by which every sculptor must be bound, for then everything like freshness and originality was driven away; the proportions of every colossal statue and of every figure upon the wall were rigidly fixed, and then the glory and excellence of art vanished from the land. To do the same in religion is even more unwise; to say, "You shall all speak after one fashion, and you all shall conform to this manner of talk and life," is folly at its height. Let each man speak after his own manner, every man in his own order, each quickened soul bringing out its own individuality, and seeking in that individuality to

magnify God and to show forth the riches of His Divine Grace. These remarks were suggested by the abundant record of cures in this Chapter and elsewhere in Luke's Gospel. Luke does not write like John, nor copy the style of Matthew; He writes not as a fisherman or a publican, but as a physician.

Luke did not cease to be Luke when he was called by Divine Grace, but he was the same man elevated and refined, and taught to consecrate to noblest ends the gifts which he had acquired in his earthly calling; he was a physician before, and he became "the beloved physician" after his conversion.

I. The text, as we read it, suggests, in the first place, that THE POWER OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL IS MAINLY A POWER TO HEAL. "The power of the Lord was present to heal them." The power of the Gospel, of which Christ is the Sum and Substance, is a healing power. My Brothers and Sisters, when Christ came on earth He might have come with destroying power. Justly enough might God have sent His only Son with the armies of vengeance to destroy this rebellious world. But—

"Your hands, dear Jesus, were not armed
With an avenging rod;
No hard commission to perform,
The vengeance of a God.
But all was mercy, all was mild,
And wrath forsook the Throne,
When Christ on the kind errand came,
And brought salvation down."

"I have not come," He said, "to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Elijah calls fire from Heaven upon the captains of fifties, and their fifties, so that they are utterly consumed; but Christ brings fire from Heaven for quite another purpose, namely, that by its power men might be saved from the Wrath to come. The Gospel is not intended to be a power to destroy. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." And if that Gospel is made a savor of death unto death unto any, it is not on account of its own intrinsic qualities or design, but because of the perversity and wickedness of the human heart. If men perish by the Gospel of Life, it is because they make that to be a stumbling stone which was meant to be a foundation.

The Gospel does not even come into the world merely to reveal disease. It is true it does discover, detect, and describe the maladies of fallen man. One of the clearest exposures of man's fallen estate is the Gospel of the Grace of God; but it is rather the design of the Law than of the Gospel to discover to man his ruin. It is by the glare of Sinai's lightning that men tremblingly read the sentence of condemnation upon those who have broken God's Law; by the gentler light of Calvary they may read the same Truth of God, and *must* read it; but this is not the main purpose of Calvary. Calvary is the place for the healing balm rather than for the lancet and the knife. The work of Jesus, our heavenly Physician, is not so much to point out disease as to indicate and to apply the remedy. Certain philosophers have made it their business and delight, with grim sarcastic smiles upon their faces, to put forth the finger and mark out human wickedness and weakness as a theme for ridicule and sarcasm.

The philosophy of the Stoics, the wisdom of such men as Diogenes, was but a heartless unpitying showing up of human folly and sin; it knew no remedy, and cared not to search for one. They showed poor manhood to he besotted, befooled, debased, and depraved, and there they left it, passing by on the other side as the priest and Levite did with the wounded man in the parable. But Jesus came upon no such fruitless errand; He *does* convict the world of sin by His Spirit, but it is not to leave the world hopelessly despairing of its restoration, but to recover it by His Power. Jesus bears with Him Power to heal; this is His honor and renown. He has the eagle's eye to see our sicknesses, the lion's heart bravely to encounter them, and the lady's hand to gently apply the heavenly ointment; in Him the three requirements of a good surgeon meet in perfection.

Beloved, I trust you and I have known this Power to heal in our own cases, and if it is so we know of a certainty that it is a *Divine Power* which comes from our Lord Jesus because He is most surely God. It is the sole prerogative of God to heal spiritual disease. Natural disease may be instrumentally healed by men, but even then the honor is to be given to God who gives virtue unto medicine, and bestows power unto the human frame to cast off disease. But as for spiritual sicknesses, these remain with the Great Physician alone; He claims it as His prerogative, "I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal," and one of the Lord's choice titles is Jehovah Rophi, The Lord Who Heals You. "I will heal you of your wounds," is a promise which could not come from the lip of man, but only from the mouth of the Eternal God. On this account the Psalmist cried unto the Lord, "O Lord, heal me, for my bones are sorely vexed," and again, "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You." For this also, the godly praise the name of the Lord, saying, "He heals all our diseases." He who *made* man can heal man; He who was at first the Creator of our nature can create it new. What a transcendent comfort it is that in the Person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth we have Deity Incarnate! "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." My Soul, whatever your disease may be, this Great Physician can heal you. If He is God, there can be no limit to His Infinite Power; if He is truly Divine, there can be no boundary to the majesty of His might.

Come then with the blind eye of your understanding, come with the limping feet of your energy, come with the maimed hand of your faith, come just as you are, for He who is God can certainly heal you. None shall say unto the healing flood of His Love, "Up to here can you go and no further." The utmost length of human sickness can be reached by this Great Physician! Have confidence, O poor doubting heart! Have unstaggering confidence in the Divine Healer.

Although our Lord Jesus healed as Divine, remember that He also possessed power to heal because of His being *Human*. Is it not written, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed"? He used no other remedy in healing our sin-sickness but that of taking our sicknesses and infirmities upon Himself. This is the one great cure-all. Blessed be the Son of God that the medicine, bitter as it is, is not for us to drink, but was all drained by Himself. He took the terrible cup in Gethsemane, and drank it dry on our account. The sharp

but healing cuts of the lancet are not made in our bodies, but He bore them in His own flesh. When the plowers made deep furrows, those furrows were not upon the sinner's shoulders, but upon the shoulders of the sinner's Substitute. Did you ever hear, O Earth, of such a Physician as this? Who heals by suffering Himself, whose pains, and sorrows, and griefs, and pangs, and torments, and anguish, and death are the only medicine by which He removes the woes of men? Blessed Son of God, if I trust You, seeing that You are Divine, how I will love You! How I will cling to You, seeing You are Human! With what gratitude I will look up to Your Cross and view You, while those blessed fountains of health are streaming crimson floods, and while Your heart, the source of all spiritual sanity, is pouring forth a heavenly efficacious torrent to wash the sinner from all his sicknesses! Come here, all you sin-sick ones, and behold the glorious Son of God, made in the likeness of human flesh, breathing out His life upon the Cross! Come here, you who mourn for sin, you who are palsied and diseased with iniquity! Here is Power, Power still present in the dying Savior to heal you, whatever your diseases may be. He healed all who had need of healing while He sojourned here, and the costly balm of His Atonement has lost none of its Power.

The Power which dwelt in Christ to heal, coming from Him as Divine and human, was *applicable*, most eminently, *to the removal of the guilt of sin.* Reading this Chapter through, one pauses with joy over that 24th verse, "The Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sin." Here, then, is one of the Great Physician's mightiest arts—He has Power to forgive sin! While He lived here below, before the ransom had been paid, before the blood had been literally sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, He had Power to forgive sin. Has He not Power to do it now that He has died? Brothers and Sisters, what Power must dwell in Him who to the utmost farthing has faithfully discharged the debts of His people! He has Power indeed, seeing that He has finished transgression and made an end of sin. If you doubt it, see Him rising from the dead! Behold Him in ascending splendor raised to the right hand of God! Hear Him pleading before the Eternal Father, pointing to His wounds, urging the merit of His sacred Passion! What Power to forgive is here! "He has ascended on high, and received gifts for men." "He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins." At this moment, Sinner, Christ has Power to pardon, Power to pardon *you,* and millions such as you are. He has nothing more to do to win your pardon; all the atoning work is done. He can, in answer to your tears, forgive your sins today, and make you know it. He can breathe into your soul at this very moment a peace with God which passes all understanding, which shall spring from perfect remission of your manifold iniquities. Do you believe that? I trust you believe it. May you experience now that the healing Power of the Gospel is Power to forgive sin! Waste no time in applying to the Physician of souls, but hurry to Him with words like these—

"Jesus! Master! Hear my cry;
Save me, heal me with a word;
Fainting at Your feet I lie,
You my whispered complaint has heard."

This is not the only form of the healing Power which dwells without measure in our glorious Lord. He heals *the sorrow of sin.* It is written, "He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds." When sin is really manifest to the conscience it is a most painful thing, and for the conscience to be effectually pacified is an unspeakable blessing. Sharper than a dagger in the heart, or an arrow piercing through the loins is conviction of sin. He who has ever smarted under the pricks of an awakened conscience well knows that there is no pain of body that can be compared to it. When crushed under the hand of God, a man may form some idea of what the miseries of Hell must be. Correspondingly joyous is the relief which Immanuel brings to us when He brings better balm than that of Gilead, and ministers Heaven's Infallible Medicine to a diseased soul. When Jesus is received by faith, He lifts all our sorrow from us in a moment. One promise applied by His Spirit, one drop of His blood brought home to the conscience, and at once there is such a peace so deep and profound that nothing can rival it. What the poet wrote concerning recovery from bodily sickness is doubly true of spiritual restoration—

"See the man that long has tossed
On the thorny bed of pain,
At length repair his vigor lost,
And breathe and walk again:
The meanest flower of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening Paradise."

God grant, that to you who fear His name the Sun of Righteousness may arise with healing beneath His wings!

Jesus also heals the *power of sin.* Sin may be in your case, dear Friend, so mighty, that like a whirlwind it hurries you away at its pleasure. You feel like the dry leaves which are driven by the tempest; you have scarcely power to resist your passions; you have perhaps, yielded so long to certain forms of evil that now you are positively powerless in strife against them. Do not however despair; Christ can surely deliver you. The demoniac had such an energy of evil within him that he broke the chains and bands with which he had been bound, he cut himself with stones, and howled all night amidst the tombs; but when Jesus came near to him he was soon seen clothed and in his right mind, sitting meekly at the Great Physician's feet. And so will you, poor captive of evil. Do not think that you have to be a drunkard, or that your angry temper always needs to be your master. Do not conceive that you must always be a slave to lust, or led captive at the devil's will. There is hope for you, where Christ is, and though your disease is of as long standing as your very life, yet a word from the powerful lips of the Son of God can make even you whole. The Power of the Gospel is a Power to heal the guilt, the sorrow, and the influence of sin; Jesus Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the devil in all their forms.

It should not be forgotten that the Lord Jesus is able to heal us of *our relapses.* I have heard men say that a relapse is what the physician frequently fears more than the primary disease, and that there is frequently a period in the healing process when the virus of disease

gathers renewed energy, and the physician feels that now and not at the first the *true* battle has to be fought. We have met with men who have professed conversion, and we trust were changed, who have gone back like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. We have had to mourn over those in whom the change appeared to be great, but it was superficial, and soon the power of evil returned upon them. But, my backsliding Hearer, Jesus is able to heal your backslidings. What a mercy that is! "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely, for My anger is turned away from them." What if you are sevenfold more a child of Hell than you were before, yet even now Eternal Mercy that drove out a legion of devils from one of old can drive them out of you. The healing Power of my Master is such, that if you have backslidden ever so far yet He says unto you, "Return! Return! Return!" There shall be more joy over you, you poor lost sheep, than over the 99 that went not astray. He shall be more glad to receive you, you wandering prodigal child, than He has joy even over that righteous son who remained always in the father's house.

To sum up much in little, my Master, as a Physician, works cures *very suddenly;* He touches, and the deed is done at once! He works *cures of all kinds.* Such as have been the stumbling stones of other physicians have been readily overcome by Him. *He never fails.* He has not in His diary one single case that has overmatched His mighty Power. He heals *effectually,* the disease never again reigns when He has once dethroned it. When He casts the devil out of the man, the devil shall not return. He heals with His word even those who think that they cannot be healed. There is no hospital for incurables now as to souls, for incurables there are none. The Friend of sinners is "able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God by Him." Cases of disease so putrid that men say, "Put them out of sight," vice so detestable that the very mention of it makes the cheek of modesty blush; such as these the master hand of Immanuel can heal. With God nothing is impossible, and with the Son of God nothing is difficult. He can save the chief of sinners, and the vilest of the vile. In the highest conceivable degree the Power of the Gospel is Power to heal. Come, poor Sinner, and behold Him who is able to heal you of your deadly wounds; come look upon Him now and live!—

"Raise to the Cross your tearful eyes,
Behold, the Prince of Glory dies!
He dies extended on the tree,
And sheds a Sovereign balm for thee."

II. A second remark arises from the text; THERE ARE SPECIAL PERIODS WHEN THE POWER TO HEAL IS MOST MANIFESTLY DISPLAYED. The verse before us says that on a certain day the Power of the Lord was present to heal, by which I understand, not that Christ is not always God, not that He was ever unable to heal, but this—that there were certain periods when He pleased to put forth His Divine Energy in the way of healing to an unusual degree. The sea is never empty; it is indeed always as full at one time as at another, but yet it is not always at flood. The sun is never dim, it shines with equal force at all hours, and yet it is not always day with us, nor do we always bask in the warmth of summer. Christ is fullness itself, but that fullness does not always

overflow; He is able to heal, but He is not always engaged in healing. There are times when the Power to save is more than usually manifest—times of refreshing, seasons of revival, days of visitation, acceptable days, days of salvation. Any student of the world's history who has read it in the light of true religion will have observed that there have been favored periods when the Power of God has been peculiarly present to heal men. My solemn conviction is that we are living in such an era, that this present moment is one of the set times when God's Power is peculiarly manifest; I gather this from many signs, but even the text assists me in my belief. Observe that on the occasion mentioned in the text *there was a great desire among the multitude to hear the Word.* In the opening of the Chapter we read that they pressed upon our Lord by the sea. Further on we find them coming from all parts of the country in multitudes. Special mention is made of doctor's of the Law and Pharisees, the last people to be impressed, who nevertheless, overcome by the common enthusiasm, were found mingling with the throng; we are told that the people thronged the house at such a rate that the palsied man could not be brought into the congregation except by the expedient of breaking through the roof!

When God's Power is moving, there will be a corresponding motion among the people; they will long to hear when God's Power is with the speaker. Take it as a sign of Divine Grace when the houses dedicated to worship are full. Consider that the Lord is about to fill the net when the fishes crowd around the boat. We cannot expect the Gospel to be blessed to those who do not hear it, we may lawfully and properly expect it will be a blessing to those who have an intense anxiety to listen to it. At the present hour I see a religious awakening among the masses of London, not as great a one as we desire, but still there it is, and we must be grateful for it. We shall not long have to put up with the pernicious nonsense of Puseyism, public opinion will aid us in putting it down. It has taken a long time to wake up our nation, but it will awaken after all. I think I see the tide of popular feeling turning in the right direction. Men are just now occupied about religious thought, and whether they think rightly or wrongly, there is more attention just now paid to religious Truth than has been for many a day; and where ministers do but preach simply and lovingly the Gospel of Christ at this moment they find no lack of hearers. This is a sure sign that the Power of the Lord is present to heal.

Observe next that the healing Power was conspicuously present when Christ *was teaching*. Note carefully the favored hour, "when He was *teaching* in a certain place." Jesus linked the healing with the teaching. It was so with the material healing, much more with the spiritual healing, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Brothers and Sisters, is there not among our own Brothers, of whom we can speak with the most certainty, more teaching of Christ now than there was? I am persuaded that the most of my Brothers preach more faithfully and fully the simple Truth of Christ Jesus than they once did. Teaching is returning to the pulpits. Now mark, dear Hearer, whether you are saved or not. If you are present where Christ is fully preached, where He is lifted up, exalted, proclaimed, and commended to you, you are in a place

where He also is present to heal; is it not written, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me"?

A further sign of present Power is found most clearly in *the sick folk who were healed by Jesus.* Now we know that in this very house not a Sunday passes without souls being converted. We have before our Church meetings the cases of hundreds whom God has blessed by the simple telling of the story of the Cross. This, then, is proof positive that when Christ is being taught, and souls being blessed, He is in a remarkable manner present to heal.

One other thing must be noted, namely, that this particular time mentioned in the text *was prefaced by a special season of prayer* on the part of the principal Actor in it. Did you notice it? He withdrew Himself and prayed, and then the Power of the Lord was present to heal them. Is it so that even with regard to Christ Himself, the Lord and Giver of Life, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead, and who has the Spirit without measure, yet before that Spirit is publicly manifested in any high degree there must be a special retirement for fervent prayer? How plainly does this say to us that the Church must pray if she would have the healing Power! But, my Brothers and Sisters, we have prayed. There has been such prayer put up by this congregation as I believe was never excelled, even in Apostolic times; and last Monday was a day of wrestling of such a kind that the blessing could not be withheld. I have almost ceased to ask further, I wait in joyful anticipation of the heavenly Visitation! I come not forth today so much as a sower as a reaper. I believe that the fish are taken in the net, and that we have only to pull it to land.

God grant the net may not break by reason of the multitude of fishes! God is with us, and that of a truth in this House this day. Wonders of Divine Grace are being worked; while we are yet speaking men are being inclined to look to Christ, while we are lifting Him up tearful eyes are looking to Him; and in many a heart there may be heard the cry, "I will arise and go to my Father." Now with all these signs meeting together, a desire to hear, a set time of private prayer, the teaching of the Word, and the manifest blessing of souls under that Word, I gather that we have arrived at this present moment at that state which is described in the text.

III. Passing on to a third thought, we observe that WHEN THE POWER OF THE LORD IS PRESENT TO HEAL, IT MAY NOT BE SEEN IN ALL, BUT MAY BE SHOWN IN SPECIAL CASES AND NOT IN OTHERS. It is a melancholy reflection that men may be in the region of Divine Power and yet not feel its operations. I have read this verse through a great many times with one objective—I have tried, if I could, to make the text mean that the Pharisees and doctors of the Law were present, and that the Power of the Lord was present to heal *them*. But the text does not so teach us; the Power of the Lord was not present to heal the doctors and Pharisees, for they were not healed. The word "them" agrees with the noun further back, according to the frequent usage of the New Testament by which the pronouns are not made to refer to the nearer noun, but to another more remote. The Power of God was present to heal the sick, not to heal the doctors, nor the Pharisees; and yet how nearly they could

have gained it, for had they but known *their* sickness, and been willing to confess *their* infirmity, there was Power enough to have healed even them; but as it was, we do not find that one of them was healed—not so much as a single doctor of the Law, or a Pharisee felt the Power of God which was passing so near to them that they were amazed and staggered and fell to quibbling about it.

Dear Hearers, this very melancholy observation must be applied to some who are present now. You may be in the midst of this congregation which is under remarkable visitations of God's Divine Grace, and yet there may be no Power present operating in your heart to heal you. You will observe that those who missed this Grace were not the harlots; infamous as they were by character, they felt the Power of the Love of Jesus and entered into His Kingdom. We do not find that this Power was lacking among the publicans; we have an instance here of one of them who made a great feast in his house for Christ. Where then was the Power lacking? Where was it unsought and unfelt? It was in the first place among *the knowing people*, the doctors of the Law. These teachers knew too much to submit to be taught by the Great Rabbi. There is such a thing as knowing too much to know anything, and being too wise to be anything but a fool. The knowledge of the doctors was that which puffs up, and not the knowledge which comes from God. Ah, dear Hearer, beware of head knowledge without heart knowledge; beware of being so orthodox as to set yourself up as a judge of the preacher, and to refuse to be obedient to the Truth of God. Beware of saying, "Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, that is very applicable to So-and-So, and very well put."

Do not criticize but feel. It were better for you that you had been a common plow-boy, whistling at the plow, who never heard these things until today, and have now listened to them, and have received them in all their novelty, and Power, and beauty for the first time; this were better for you than to have heard them till they ring in your ears like the bell which you have heard every Sunday, of whose monotony you are weary. Beware of going down to Hell with a millstone of sound Doctrine about your necks, for if you will be damned you may as well perish knowing the Truth of God as not knowing it! No, if you catch the formula and lay hold upon the creed, and imagine yourself to be teachers of others, it is even easier to perish in that state than it is if you came in to hear the Word untaught before in its glad message. These were the knowing ones who had no Power to be healed!

Those, moreover, who had a good opinion of themselves were left unblessed. The Pharisees! No better people anywhere, from Dan to Beersheba, than the Pharisees, if you would take them upon their own testimony. Observe with due respect their public character. Were they not most eminent? See the breadth of the borders of their garments! How visible were their phylacteries! How diligently did they wash their hands before they ate! How scrupulous about straining out gnats from their wine! How careful to tithe the anise, and mint, and cummin! Yet these were the people who obtained no blessing from Jesus. They were too good to be saved. How many people there are of this kind! "Well," says one, "I know I never robbed anybody; I have brought up my family respectably, and conducted myself with such decorum that nobody could

possibly find fault with me." Just so, and you will not have Christ because you are whole, and have no need of a physician. "Ah," says another, "surely if we do our duty to the best of our ability it will be all right with us." If you think thus you will find that when you have done your duty to the best of your ability, you will have no part nor lot in a Savior, because manifestly, on your own showing, you do not require one. The Lord Jesus will take your own showing and will say, "I never knew you. How could I know you? You were never sick; you never needed Me; you declared that you were whole, and you would not stoop to accept the salvation which I, the Savior, came to bring." Thus will Jesus speak to you who now proudly despise His Grace.

Once again, the people who did not get the blessing were not only the knowing ones and the very good ones, but they were also *the people who stood by.* As one observes, they did not come to be preached at, they came for Christ to preach *before* them. That used to be the old style of sermon prefaces—"A sermon preached *before* the honorable or worshipful company of So-and-So." Now that is the worst kind of preaching anywhere, preaching *before* people; preaching right *at* people is the only preaching worth hearing and worth uttering. But they did not come for Christ to operate upon them; they were not patients, they were visitors in the hospitals. Like visitors they went round to the beds and looked at the prescriptions put over the sick, and observed each case, and when the physician came in and began to exercise his art upon the sick, they stood by and criticized his treatment, imagining all the while that they were not sick themselves. If they had been lying on the bed sick they could have been healed, but they took only a superficial interest in the healing, for they came not to partake in it. Beware, my dear Hearers, of going to places of worship merely to be lookers. There will be no lookers in Heaven, and there will be no lookers in Hell! Take care that you do not play the looker in the worship of God here. Every Truth of God spoken by God's servants has a bearing upon you. If it is threatening, and you are in the gall of bitterness, it is yours, tremble under it! If it is the promise of Divine Love, then if you have no part in it, be afraid, be ashamed, be alarmed, and fly to Christ that you may partake in it. Those who get no blessing are those who suppose they do not particularly need it and stand by, having merely come to see and to be seen, but not to receive a cure.

Those who felt not the healing power sneered and quarreled. They said further down in the Chapter, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" When a man gets no good *out of* the ministry, he is pretty sure to think there is no good *in* the ministry; and when he himself for want of stooping down to drink, finds no water in the river, he concludes it is dry; whereas it is his own stubborn knee that will not bend, and his own willful mouth that will not open to receive the Gospel. But if they quarrel, if they raise questions, if they dispute, we know their breed, we understand the race to which they belong, and we know how Jesus said to them of old, "You generation of vipers, how shall you escape the damnation of Hell?" If any shall not escape, surely they shall not whose only hearing of the Gospel is to make it the butt of their sarcasm and the object of their ridicule, who look derisively even at the Cross itself with a dying Savior upon it,

and thrust their tongue into their cheek, and make jests and merriment of the agonies of the world's Redeemer.

Beware, lest you have those jests in your mouth on earth, which you will have to digest in Hell! Beware, lest your mockery return upon you at the Last Great Day when the words of Solomon shall be fulfilled, "Because I called and you refused, I stretched out My hands and no man regarded, I also will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear comes." There were persons then to whom the present Power of Christ to heal was of no service whatever, and there may be such now. Friend, are you such an one?

IV. In the last place, I want Christian people here to observe that WHEN THE POWER OF CHRIST WAS PRESENT, IT CALLED FORTH THE ENERGY OF THOSE WHO WERE HIS FRIENDS TO WORK WHILE THAT POWER WAS MANIFEST.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, the members of this Church especially, what I have to say is earnestly addressed to you. You will perceive that as soon as ever it was discovered that the Power of healing was present, loving hearts desired to bring in others that they might experience it. Four persons took each a corner of a bed and brought in a palsied man who could not come of himself, and they let him down with much inconvenience through the roof. God is blessing the Church now. Christian men and women, join together to pray for your friends who cannot or will not pray for themselves; and if you meet with any in deep distress, palsied with despair, who cannot lift the finger of faith, strive to bring them to hear the Gospel, bring them where Christ is working miracles. If one of you cannot prevail to lay the case before the Lord, let two of you unite; if two should not be enough, let four blend their petitions; if four should not suffice, tell it to the *Church* and ask the whole to pray; but strive to bring dying sinners where Christ is working spiritual miracles.

If you read further on in the Chapter you will learn how to bring some persons to the Savior who would never hear of Him otherwise. Levi made a great feast, for he thought to himself, "I should like Jesus to come and preach to the publicans. They are such great sinners, just such as I am; if I could but get them to hear Him they might be converted. "But," he thought, "if I ask them they would say they could not afford to give up a day's work, they will not care to listen to a sermon; so (he said) I will get them this way, I will invite them to my house to a feast; they will be sure to come then, and then I will ask Jesus to come and eat with them, and I know He will not let them go without saying a good word." So you see he used arts as fowlers do when they are anxious to catch their prey. Now cannot you be as watchful and thoughtful in your generation as Levi was? Cannot you get the outcasts and the neglecters of the Sunday to your own house or to anybody else's house, and use means to bring them under the sound of God's Word? Why, if you have a few flowers in your back room, if it rains in the summer time, do not you always put them out in it? You put all the pots out in the garden to let them catch the shower. Do so with your friends, your neighbors, your children, your kinsfolk, while the rain of Divine Grace is dropping, try to get them under the influence of it, and if they will not come by one means try another,

only get them where the Power of the Lord is present, for perhaps Jesus may look upon them and they may look to Him and may be healed.

And oh, let me say in closing, if they should not be saved, the responsibility will not then rest with you, even as the responsibility this morning does not rest with me. We have proclaimed to you in this House many times that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. We have told you that the heavenly Father is willing to receive returning sinners, that He delights in mercy, that He is free to blot out sin. We have told you that the blood of Christ can make the filthiest clean, that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. We have urged you to flee away like doves to Jesus' wounds. The Power of the Spirit of God has led many of you to come to Him, and you are saved; but alas, there still remains a multitude who are unsaved. Well, if you perish, it is not because Christ has not been taught in your streets. You will go down to Hell, some of you, with the Light of God shining on your eyelids, but with your eyes willfully closed against it; you will perish with the voice of Mercy ringing in your ears; and in Hell you will be awful monuments to the Justice of God who will then say to you, "You sinned against light and knowledge, and against love and mercy." If they perish who despised Moses' Law, how shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?

May the Holy Spirit now with mighty Power, apply the precious blood of Jesus to every hearer, and unto God shall be Glory world without end. Amen.

"Blessed Savior, at Your feet I lie,
Here to receive a cure or die;
But Grace forbids that painful fear,
Almighty Grace, which triumphs here.
You will withdraw the poisoned dart,
Bind up and heal the wounded heart;
With blooming health my face adorn,
And change the gloomy night to morn."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 5.

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

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THE LAST ENEMY DESTROYED
NO. 721

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 18, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The last enemy that will be destroyed is death."
1 Corinthians 15:26.

OUR Savior stooped to the lowest depths of degradation, He shall be exalted to the topmost heights of glory. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." Our Lord was trampled beneath the feet of all, but the day comes when all things shall be trampled beneath His feet. By so much as He descended, by so much shall He ascend; by the greatness of His sufferings may we judge of the unspeakable grandeur of His Glory. Already sin lies beneath His feet, and Satan, like the old dragon bound, is there also. The systems of idolatry which were paramount in the days of His flesh, He has broken as with a rod of iron. Where are the gods of Rome and Greece? Where are Jupiter, Diana, and Mercury? Let the moles and the bats reply. The colossal systems of idolatry which still dominate over the minds of men must yet come down; the Truth of God as it is in Jesus must before long prevail over those ancient dynasties of error, for Jesus our Lord must reign from the river even unto the ends of the earth. In these last times, when sin in all its forms and Satan with all his craft shall be subdued, then Death itself, the unconquerable Death, the insatiable devourer of the human race who has swept them away as grass before the mower's scythe—then shall Death who has feared the face of none, but has laid armies prostrate in his wrath, be utterly destroyed. He who is immortality and life shall bring death of Death and destruction to the grave, and unto Him shall be songs of everlasting praise. Contemplate the Glory of your Master, then, Believer. From the base of the pyramid, deep in darkness, He rises to the summit which is high in glory; from the depths of the abyss of woe He leaps to the tops of the mountain of joy. Anticipate His triumph by faith, for you shall partake in it; as surely as you share in His abasement, you shall also partake in His Glory, and the more you shall become conformable unto Him in His sufferings, the more may you rest assured that you shall be partakers with Him in the Glory which is to be revealed.

Come we now to the text itself. The text teaches us that Death itself is at the last to be vanquished by Christ, no, it is to be utterly destroyed by Him so that it shall cease to be. In handling the text, there are four things which at once strike you. Here is *Death an enemy;* but, secondly, he is *the last enemy;* and, thirdly, *he is an enemy to be destroyed;* but, fourthly, *he is the last enemy that shall be destroyed.*

I. First, then, you have in our banquet of this morning, as your first course, BITTER HERBS, wormwood mingled with gall; for you have DEATH AN ENEMY. It is not difficult to perceive in what respects Death is an enemy. Consider him apart from the Resurrection, apart from the glorious Promises which spring up like sweet flowers sown by celestial hands upon the black soil of the tomb, and Death is preeminently an enemy. Death is an enemy because *it is always repugnant to the nature of living creatures to die.* Flesh and blood cannot love Death. God has wisely made self-preservation one of the first laws of our nature; it is an attribute of a living man to desire to prolong his life. "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life," it is our dearest heritage. To throw away life by suicide is a crime, and to waste life in folly is no mean sin. We are bound to prize life. We must do so; it is one of the instincts of our humanity, and he were not greater but less than man who did not care to live. Death must always, then, by creatures that breathe, be looked upon as a foe.

Death may well be counted as a foe, because it entered into the world and became the master over the race of Adam through our worst enemy, SIN. It came not in accordance to the course of nature, but according to the course of evil. Death came not in by the door, but it climbed up some other way, and we may therefore rest assured that it is a thief and a robber. It was not in the natural constitution of humanity that man should die, for the first man, Adam, was made a living soul. Eminent physiologists have said that they do not detect in the human system any particular reason why man should die at fourscore years. The same wheels which have gone on for twenty, thirty, 40 years might have continued their revolutions for a 100 years, or even for centuries, as far as their own self-renewing power is concerned. There is no reason in man's body itself why it should inevitably return to the dust from which it was taken; or if there is now such a reason, it may be traceable to the disease which sin has brought into our constitution; but, as originally formed, man might have been immortal—he *would* have been immortal. In that garden, if the leaves had faded, *he* would not, and if the animals had died (and I suppose they would, for they certainly did die before Adam came into the world), yet there is no need that Adam should have died—he could have renewed his youth like the eagle and remained immortal amidst mortality, a king and priest forever, if God had so chosen it should be; instead of which, through sin, though he is even now a priest, he must, like Aaron, go up to the top of the hill and put off his priestly garments and breathe out his life. Sin brought in death, and nothing that came in by sin can be man's friend. Death, the child of Sin, is the foe of man.

That the Truth of God before us is most sure, some persons know by very bitter experience, for *it embitters their existence.* To some men this is the one drop of gall which has made life bitter to them, the thought that they should die shades them with raven wings. By the fear of death they are all their lifetime subject to bondage. Like Uriah, the Hittite, they

carry in their bosom the message which ordains their death; but, unlike he, they know that it contains the fatal mandate. Like cloth, which feeds the moth which devours it, their fears and forebodings feed the fatal worm. When their cups are sweetest they remember the dregs of death, and when their viands are the daintiest they think of the black servitor who will clear away the feast. They can enjoy nothing, because the darkness of death's shade lies across the landscape; the ghost of Death haunts them, the skeleton sits at their table; they are mournfully familiar with the shroud, the coffin, and the sepulcher; but they are familiar with these not as with friendly provisions for a good night's rest, but as the cruel ensigns of a dreaded foe. This makes Death an enemy with emphasis, when our fears enable him thus to spoil our life. When Death rides his pale horse, roughshod, over all terrestrial joys, he makes us feel that it is a poor thing to live because the thread of life is so soon to be cut, a miserable thing even to flourish, because we only flourish like the green herb, and, like the green herb—are cut down and cast into the oven.

Many others have found Death to be their foe, not so much because they themselves have been depressed by the thought, but because *the great enemy has made fearful breaches in their daily comforts.* O you Mourners, your somber garments tell me that your family circle has been broken into, time after time, by this ruthless destroyer. The widow has lost her comfort and her stay; the children have been left desolate and fatherless. O Death, you are the cruel enemy of our hearths and homes. The youthful spirit has lost half itself when the beloved one has been torn away, and men have seemed like maimed souls when the best half of their hearts has been snatched from them. Hope looked not forth at the window because the mourners went about the streets. Joy drank no more from her crystal cup, for the golden bowl was broken, and the wheel was broken at the cistern, and all the daughters of music were brought low. How often have the unseen arrows of Death afflicted our household, and struck at our feet those whom we least could spare. The green have been taken as well as the ripe—death has cut down the father's hope and the mother's joy, and, worse than this, he has pitilessly torn away from the house its strongest pillar and torn out of the wall the corner stone. Death has no heart of compassion; his flinty heart feels for none; he spares neither young nor old. Tears cannot keep our friends for us, nor can our sighs and prayers reanimate their dust. He is an enemy indeed, and the very thought of his cruel frauds upon our love makes us weep.

He is an enemy to us in that *he has taken away from us One who is dearer to us than all others.* Death has even made a prey of Him who is immortality and life. On yonder Cross behold death's most dreadful work. Could it not spare *Him?* Were there not enough of us? Why should it smite our David who was worth ten thousand of us? Did it not suffice that we, the common men who had been tainted by sin, should fall by a doom that was justly due to our sin; but must the virgin-born, in whom

there was no sin—the Immaculate Savior—must He die? Yes, Death's vengeance was not satisfied till out of his quiver had been drawn the fatal arrow which should pierce the heart of the Son of God. Behold He dies! Those eyes that wept over Jerusalem are glazed in death's deepest darkness. Those hands that scattered blessings hang as inanimate clay by that bloodstained but lifeless side. The body must be wrapped in spices and fine linen, and laid within the silent tomb. Weep, Heaven! Mourn, Earth! Your King is dead, the Prince of Life and Glory is a prisoner in the tomb. Death, all-conquering tyrant, you are an enemy indeed, for you have slain and led our dearest One into your gloomy cell.

We may more fully perceive Death's enmity in *our own persons.* He is an enemy to us because very soon *he will bear us away from all our prized possessions.* "These things," said one, as he walked through fine gardens and looked upon lawns, and parks, and mansions—"these things make it hard to die." To leave the fair goods and gains of earth, and to return into the womb of mother earth as naked as first we came forth from it; to have the crown taken from the head, and the ermine from the shoulder, and to be brought down to the same level as the poorest beggar who slept upon a dunghill, is no small thing.

Dives must be unwrapped of his scarlet, and if he shall find a tomb he shall be no more honored than Lazarus though Lazarus should die unburied. Death is an enemy to man, because though he may store up his goods and build his barns and make them greater, yet it is Death who said, "You fool, this night shall your soul be required of you." Death makes wealth a dream, it turns misers' gain to loss, and laughs a hoarse laugh at toiling slaves who load themselves with yellow dust. When the rich man has made his fortune, he wins six foot of earth and nothing more, and what less has he who died a pauper?

Death is an enemy to Christians too because *it carries them away from choice society.* We have often said—

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this;"

we love the Saints—the people of God are our company, and with our Brothers and Sisters we walk to His House, who are our familiar companions, and alas, we are to be taken away from them; nor is this all, we are to be parted from those who are nearer still—the wife of our bosom and the children of our care. Yes, we must bid farewell to every loved one, and go our way to the land from which no traveler returns, banished from the militant host of God and from the happy homes of men. Death is an enemy because it breaks up all our *enjoyments.* No cheerful peals of Sunday bells again for us, no going up to the much-loved sanctuary where the holy hymn has often borne us aloft as on eagle's wings, no more listening to the teachings of the Christian ministry, when Boanerges has awakened us and Barnabas has consoled us, until the desert of our life has blossomed like a rose; no mingling in communion around the Master's Table, no more drinking of the cup and eating of the bread which symbolizes the Master's sufferings. At Death's door we bid farewell to all Sunday enjoyment and sanctuary joys.

Oh you enemy, you do compel us to give a long, a last farewell to all our *employments*. The earnest and successful minister must leave the flock, perhaps to be scattered or torn by grievous wolves. Just when it seemed as if his life were most necessary the leader falls, and like a band of freshly enlisted young recruits who lose the warrior whose skill had led them on to victory, they are scattered when he seemed necessary to make them one, and lead them on to conquest. She who was training up her children in God's fear sleeps in the grave when the children need her most, and he who spoke for Christ, or who was a pillar in the House of God, who served his day and generation—he too must fall asleep—no more to feed the hungry, or to clothe the naked, or to teach the ignorant, or comfort the feeble-minded. He is gone from the vineyard of the Church that needed him to trim the vines, and from the House of God which needed him as a wise master builder to edify it to perfection. Who but an enemy could have taken him away at such a moment and from such engagements? He is gone too, dear Friends, from all the *success of life*, and herein has Death been his bitter enemy. He is gone from hearing the cries of penitent sinners, the true success of God's ministers, gone from leading pilgrims to the Cross, and hearing their songs of joy. Great-Heart has led many a caravan of pilgrims to the Celestial City, but now he himself must cross the Jordan. It little avails him that he has fought with Giant Despair and brought him to his knees, it matters little that he slew old Giant Grim who would have forced Christiana and the children to go back—hero as he has been, the floods must still roll over his head; of that black and bitter stream he too must drink, and that too, very probably when God had honored him most, and favored him with the prospect of yet greater success. So, Brothers and Sisters, it may be with you; when you are most diligent in business, most fervent in spirit, and serving the Lord with the greatest joy, when your sheaves are heavy and you are shouting the Harvest Home, it may be then that this unwelcome enemy will hasten you from the field of your triumph to leave to others the work you loved so well.

Nor is this all. This enemy is peculiarly so to us, because *we are accustomed to surround the thought of his coming with many pains,* with many infirmities, and above all, since the decay, corruption, and utter dissolution of the body is in itself a most terrible thing, we are alarmed at the prospect of it. The pains and groans and dying strife drive us back from the grave's brink, and make us long to linger in our prison and our clay. We fear to pass through the gate of iron because of the grim porters of Pain and Sickness who sit before the gate. Certainly to some it is hard work to die. While life is still vigorous it will not yield its dominion without a struggle; in other cases where old age has gradually smoothed the pathway, we have known many of our Brothers and Sisters who sleep themselves into a better land, and none could tell when they passed the mysterious line which divides the realm of life from the domain of death. It is not always that Death is escorted by bodily griefs, but so often does he come with clouds and darkness round about him that men at the first

glance conclude from his hostile array that he is no friend of theirs. He is an enemy, no, *the* enemy, the very worst enemy that our fears could conjure up, for we could fight with Satan and overcome him, but who can overcome Death? We can master sin through the precious blood of Jesus, and can be more than a conqueror over all our fears, but we must bow before the iron specter of this grim tyrant; to the dust we must descend, and midst the tombs we all must sleep (unless, indeed, unless the Lord should speedily come), for it is appointed unto men once to die.

II. Having said enough upon this topic we shall now take away the dish of bitter herbs, and bring forth a *little salt* while we speak upon the second point—though death is an enemy, IT IS THE LAST ENEMY. I say salt, because it is not altogether sweet; there is a pungency as well as a savor, here. It is the last enemy—what if I say it is the dreaded reserve of the army of Hell? When Satan shall have brought up every other adversary, and all these shall have been overcome through the blood of the Lamb, then the last, the bodyguard of Hell, under the command of the King of Terrors, the strongest, the fiercest, the most terrible of foes, shall assail us! It has been the custom of some great commanders to keep a body of picked men in reserve to make the final assault. Just when battalion after battalion have been swept away, and the main army reels; just when the victory is almost in the enemy's hands, the all but defeated commander pours his mightiest legions upon the foe, uncovers all his batteries and makes one terrible and final charge with the old guard that never has been beaten, and never can surrender, and then perhaps at the last moment he snatches triumph from between the enemy's teeth. Ah, Christian, the last charge may be the worst you have ever known; you may find in your last moments that you will have need of all your strength, and more, you will be compelled to cry to the Strong for strength, you will have to plead for heavenly reinforcements to succor you in that last article. Let no man conclude himself at the close of the war till he is within the pearly gates; for, if there is but another five minutes to live, Satan will, if possible, avail himself of it. The enemy may come in like a flood precisely at that flattering moment when you hoped to dwell in the land Beulah, and to be lulled to rest by soft strains from the celestial choirs.

It is not always so, it is not *often* so, for, "at eventide there shall be light" is usually the experience of the Christian; but it is sometimes so; it has been notably so with those whose previous life has been very peaceful; a calm day has ended with a stormy evening, and a bright sun has set amid dark clouds. Some of those whose candle never went out before have been put to bed in the dark. The soldiers of the Cross have been pursued by the foe up to the city walls, as if the Lord had said to His soldier, "There are more laurels yet to win, behold I give you another opportunity of glorifying My name among My militant people." Brothers and Sisters, if Death is the *last* enemy, I do not think we have to fight with him now; we have other enemies who claim our valor and our watchfulness today. We need not be taken up with devising plans of

present defense against an enemy that does not yet assail us. The present business of life, the present service of God and of His cause are our main concern, and in attending to these we shall, as Christians, be found best prepared to die. To live well is the way to die well. Death is not our first foe but the last; let us then fight our adversaries in order, and overcome them each in its turn, hoping that He who has been with us even until now will be with us until the end.

Notice, dear Friends—for here lies the savor of the thought—it is the LAST enemy. Picture in your mind's eye our brave soldiers at the battle of Waterloo; for many weary hours they had been face to face with the foe; the fight had lasted so long and been so frequently renewed that they seemed to have encountered successive armies, and to have fought a dozen battles; charge after charge had they borne like walls of stone—imagine then that the commander is able to announce that they have only to endure one more onslaught of the foe. How cheerfully do the ranks close! How gallantly are the squares formed! How firmly their feet are planted! "Now," they say, "let us stand like a wall of rock; let no man shrink for a moment, for it is the last the enemy can do. He will do his worst, but soon he will be able to do no more but sound to boot and saddle, and leave the field to us." The last enemy! Soldiers of Christ, do not the words animate you? Courage, Christian, courage; the tide *must* turn after this, it is the highest wave that now dashes over you; courage, Man, the night must close, you have come to its darkest hour, the day star already dawns! Now that you are dying you begin to live. The last enemy conquered! Does it not bring tears to your eyes to think of bearing your last temptation? We little care who the foe may be, if he is but conquered and is but the last, for have we not been perplexed with a succession of enemies? We have only conquered one foe to find another waiting for us. Our path has been up to now from temptation to temptation, from trial to trial, from tribulation to tribulation. We are growing weary, we cannot forever bear wave upon wave, grief upon grief, and temptation upon temptation. Like the warrior of old, our arm grows weary, but our hand (glory be to Divine Grace!) cleaves to our sword; we are faint, yet pursuing; and what good news when we shall hear that the present enemy is the last!

Though it is Death, we will rejoice! O Christian, there will be no more poverty to tempt you to murmur, no more losses and crosses to cast your spirit down, no more inbred sins to mar your devotion, and to spoil the glory of your faith! There will be no outward temptation, no sinners with their trifling talk to vex your ears, no blasphemies to torment your soul, no more aches and pains of body, no more tortures and troubles of spirit! The Dog of Hell will be silenced forever, there will be no more Canaanites to drive out of the land, the race of Amalek shall be utterly destroyed. And where will you be? In the land that flows with milk and honey, in the home of peace and the abode of rapture—

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

Well may you welcome Death! Let him come in his chariot of fire, he bears you to Elijah's God! Let him lay hold of the shield and buckler, and frown upon you like a king of fierce speech and terrible countenance, he carries you not into captivity, but delivers you out of bondage. At his coming your sky may be darkened, the thunders may roll, and the solid pillars of your house may be shaken, but it is the last commotion, and is therefore the token of everlasting rest. Having overcome Death, peace is proclaimed, the sword is sheathed, the banners furled, and you are forever more than a conqueror through Him who loved you.

III. Having come so far, we may now proceed another step. Death is an enemy, the last enemy—HE IS AN ENEMY TO BE DESTROYED. Here I take away the salt and bring *the milk and honey,* for surely here is much of exquisite sweetness and of true spiritual food to the child of God. Death is the last enemy to be destroyed. The destruction of Death will be perfectly achieved at the Resurrection, for then Death's castle, the tomb, will be demolished, and not so much as one stone left upon another. All Death's captives must go free; not a bone of the saints shall be kept as a trophy by the arch foe; not so much as a particle of their dust shall he be able to show as a spoil which he has been able to preserve. He must disgorge the whole that he has fed upon; he must pay back all that he has stolen; the prey shall be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall be delivered. From the land and from the sea, those who were lately dead, and those that centuries ago had dissolved into dust shall rise. The quickening trumpet shall achieve a work as great as the Creation. The Voice of God which said, "Let there be light" and there was light, shall say, "Let there be life," and there shall be life; and, as in the Valley of Vision, bone shall come to bone, and flesh shall come upon them, and life shall come into them, and they shall live. The same bodies shall arise, the same for identity, but not the same for quality! The same, but oh, how changed! They were the shriveled seed when Death sowed them in the earth, they shall be the fully developed flower when Resurrection's springtime shall bid them blossom from the dust. They were battered and time-worn when he dragged them to his den; they shall come forth with the dew of their youth upon them when Christ shall give them life.

Oh the sweet gains of death! "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption." Oh the interest which we shall win from that arch usurer who thought to claim both principal and interest! "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." It is sown a natural body, it is raised a heavenly and spiritual body. O Death, you are no gainer by us, but we shall be mighty gainers by you, though this poor body shall become worms' meat, and decay shall drive its tunnels through and through and through this mortal frame and make its solemn way; though back to dust eye and arm and hand and brain must mold, yet not lost, nor in any degree injured, shall the whole fabric be; but as if it were filtered, purified by the grave, the fair body shall emerge again. The grave shall be to the Believer's body as the bath of spices in which Esther bathed

herself to make herself ready to behold the great King. Corruption, earth, and worms do but refine this flesh, and make it pure according to God's will, until we shall put it on afresh at His bidding. We throw aside a workday dress, all torn, and crumpled and dusty; we are glad to put it off, glad that evening time has come, and that it is time to undress; but when we awake, we shall find, instead of that worn-out vesture, a noble change of clothes. The same dress will be there, but marvelously changed—the great Fuller shall have exercised His art upon it, and made it like the array which Moses and Elijah wore on Tabor. How goodly will our royal robes be, how dressed with pearls, how stiff with threads of gold, and studs of silver, how fitted for God's priests and kings, how meet for those who shall enter the pearly gates, and tread the golden streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, how meet for those who shall walk in the golden light of the city that has foundations, whose Maker and Builder is God! Death is thus to be destroyed by the resurrection of the body when our Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout; a Resurrection which shall prove to assembled worlds that to those who are in Christ Jesus, "to die *is* gain."

But, dear Friends, although this is a great Truth of God with regard to the future, I desire to conduct your minds for a few minutes over the road by which Christ has, in effect, virtually destroyed Death already. In the first place, *He has taken away the shame of death.* It was once a shameful thing to die. A man might hold his head low in the presence of angels who could not die, for he might remember with shame that he is the brother of the worm and corruption is his sister. But now we can talk of death in the presence of archangels and not be ashamed, for Jesus died. It is from now on no degradation for man to die, to sleep in the bed where Christ reposed; it is an honor, and angels may almost regret that they have not the ability in this respect to be made like unto the angels' Lord. Oh, Christian, you need not speak of death with bated breath, but rather rejoice that you have fellowship with Jesus in His tomb, and shall have fellowship with Him as one of the children of the Resurrection.

Christ has, moreover, taken away the *sting of death*. The sting of death lay in this, that we had sinned and were summoned to appear before the God whom we had offended. This is the sting of death to you, unconverted ones, not that you are dying, but that after death is the judgment, and that you must stand before the Judge of the quick and the dead to receive a sentence for the sins which you have committed in your body against Him. This makes it death to die; this hangs the dying bed with black curtains, and puts out the light of the sick chamber—the second death makes death to be death indeed; but—

"If sin is pardoned I'm secure,
Death has no sting beside;
The Law gave sin its damning power,
But Christ, my Ransom, died."

Christmas Evans represents the monster Death as being so intent to destroy our Lord, that it drove the dart in its tail right through the Savior, till it stuck in the Cross on the other side, and the monster has

never been able to draw it out again. Christ on the Cross took away the sting of Death, so that he has no further power to hurt the Christian. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law, but thanks be unto God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Our Divine Lord has taken away from sin *its slavery.* The bondage of death arises from man's fearing to die. Death has fitted fetters upon many a man's wrists, and fixed an iron collar on his neck, and driven him with his whip about the world, but Jesus has taken away the yoke of Death from the necks of His disciples. The Christian is not afraid to die; he looks forward to it, sometimes, with equanimity, and frequently even with expectation. Hundreds of saints have been able to speak of dying as though it were but everyday work, and there have been hundreds more who have looked forward to their last day with as much delight as the bride hopes for her wedding. Was not our song, which we sung just now, a truthful one?—

"Sweet truth to me!
I shall arise,
And with these eyes
My Savior see."

It was to some of us at any rate and we are still desirous to sing it, longing for that time when our death shall come, and we shall enter into the joy of our Lord!

Moreover, Christ has abolished Death by removing its greatest *sorrows*. I told you that Death snatched us away from the society of those we loved on earth; it is true, but it introduces us into nobler society by far. We leave the imperfect Church on earth, but we claim membership with the perfect Church in Heaven. The Church militant must know us no more, but of the Church triumphant we shall be happy members. We may not see time-honored men on earth who now serve Christ in the ministry, but we shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the noble army of martyrs, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, and the glorious company of the Apostles. We shall be no losers, certainly in the matter of society, but great gainers when we are introduced to the general assembly and the Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in Heaven. I said that we should be taken away from enjoyments. I spoke of Sunday bells that would ring no longer, of communion tables at which we could not sit, and songs of holy mirth in which we could not join—ah, it is small loss compared with the unspeakable gain, for we shall hear the bells of Heaven ring out an unending Sunday, we shall join the songs that never have a pause, and which know no discord; we shall sit at the banqueting table where the King Himself is present, where the symbols and the signs have vanished because the guests have found the Substance, and the Eternal and Immortal King will be visibly in their presence.

Beloved, we leave the desert to lie down in green pastures; we leave the scanty rills to bathe in the bottomless river of joy, we leave the wells of Elim for the land which flows with milk and honey. Did I speak of leaving possessions? What are the possessions? Moth-eaten garments,

cankered gold and silver, things that rust consumes and that thieves destroy. But we go to the land where nothing corrupts or decays, where flowers fade not, and riches take not to themselves wings to fly away. Loss! Let the word be banished! Death gives us infinitely more than he takes away. I spoke of Death as an enemy because he took us from sacred employments. It is so, but does he not usher us into far nobler employments? To stand before that Throne of God upon the sea of glass mingled with fire, to bow within the Presence chamber of the King of kings, gazing into the Glory that excels, and to see the King in His beauty, the Man who once was slain wearing many crowns and arrayed in the vesture of His Glory, His wounds like sparkling jewels still visible above. Oh to cast our crowns at His feet. to lie there and shrink into nothing before the Eternal All, to fly into Jesus' bosom, to behold the beauty of His Love, and to taste the kisses of His mouth, to be in Paradise, swallowed up in unutterable joy because taken into the closest, fullest, nearest communion with Himself; would not your soul burst from the body even now to obtain this rapture? Cannot you say—

"I'd part with all the joys of sense
To gaze upon Your throne,
Pleasure springs fresh forever there,
Unspeakable, unknown"?

If death does but give us a sight of Jesus and makes it our employment to forever sing His praise, and forever to learn His Character, forever more to lie in His bosom, then let Death come when he wills, we will scarcely call him enemy again. An enemy destroyed in this case becomes a friend. The sting is taken away from you, you hornet, and you become a bee to gather sweet honey for us! The lion is slain, and like Samson we go forth to gather handfuls of sweetness.

I shall not tarry longer, though greatly tempted, except to say this one thing more—the fear of death which arises from the prospect of pain and grief is also taken away by Christ when He reminds us that He will be with us in our last moments. He will make the dying bed feel soft, and in the midst of the river He will say, "Fear not, I am with you." So that in all respects death is to be destroyed.

IV. Time warns us to clear the tables and send home the guests with the fourth consideration, THAT DEATH IS THE LAST ENEMY THAT WILL BE DESTROYED. Do not, therefore, give yourself so much concern if you do not feel death to be destroyed in you at present. Supposing that it does cause you pain and fear, remember that Dying Grace would be of no value to you in living moments. Expect that if your faith is not faith enough to die with, yet if it is faith as a grain of mustard seed it will grow; and, grow it will, into a more developed state, enabling you to die triumphantly when dying time comes. When I looked at the *Book of Martyrs* and noticed the fearful pictures of Saints in their dying agonies, I asked myself, "Could I bear all that for Christ?" and I was compelled to say, "No, I know I could not as I am now." But suppose I were called to martyrdom, could I bear it? And I thought I could say without presumption I could, for Christ would give me Grace when Dying Grace

was needed. Now, Death is to be destroyed, but not till the last. You have many enemies who are not destroyed, and you have inbred sins not slain. Look well to *them*. Until they are all gone you must not expect Death to be destroyed, for he is the last to die.

So then, Friend, let me whisper in your ear, expect, still, to lose your dear ones, for Death is not destroyed. Look not upon any of your friends as though they would be with you tomorrow, for Death is not destroyed yet. See the word "mortal" written upon all our brows. The most unlikely ones die first. When I heard during this week of several cases of dear friends who have gone to their reward, I could have sooner believed it had been others, but God has been pleased to take from us and from our congregation many whom we supposed to be what are called good lives, and they were good lives in the best sense, and that is why the Master took them; they were ripe, and He took them Home. But we could not see that. Now, remember that all your friends, your wife, your husband, your child, your kinsfolk, are all mortal. That makes you sad. Well, it may prevent your being more sad when they are taken away. Hold them with a loose hand; do not count that to be freehold which you have only received as a leasehold; do not call that yours which is only lent you, for if you get a thing lent to you and it is asked for back, you give it back freely; but if you entertain the notion that it was given to you, you do not like to yield it up. Now, remember, the enemy is not destroyed, and that he will still make inroads into our family circle. And then remember that you, too, must die. Bring yourself frequently face to face with this Truth of God—that you must die. Do not forget it, Christian Friend. No man knows whether his faith is good for anything or not if he does not frequently try that faith by bringing himself right to the edge of the grave. Picture yourself dying, conceive yourself breathing out your last breath, and see whether then you can look at Death without quaking—whether you can feel, "Yes, I have rested upon Jesus. I am saved, I will go through Death's tremendous vale with His Presence as my stay, fearing no evil."

If you have no good hope, may God give you Divine Grace at this moment to fly to Jesus, and to trust in Him, and when you have trusted in Him Death will be to you a destroyed enemy. May God grant His blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
1 COR. 15:1-32, 50-58.

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DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 25, 1866,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus answered, 'I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way,' that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spoke, 'Of those whom You gave Me have I lost none.' "
John 18:8, 9.

THE whole story of our Lord's Passion is exceedingly rich in meaning. One is tempted to linger over every separate sentence of the narratives given by the Evangelists. It is possible to preach several series of sermons upon the whole story, and there is not a single incident, though it may seem to be but accidental, which might not furnish a wealth of holy thought to the careful student. In looking through this Chapter one was greatly tempted to speak awhile upon the Master's selecting the place of His prayer as the place of His agony and betrayal—the holy prudence and forethought by which He had as it were cast up His entrenchments, and made His defenses upon the very spot where He knew He would meet the shock of the evening's first onslaught; a lesson to us, Christians, not to venture out into the day's battle without girding on our armor, nor make a voyage upon the sea of life without having seen to it that the vessel is well supplied against every possible danger which may be encountered upon the storm-tossed sea. Jesus prays before He fights, and so must we if we would overcome. One is tempted also to dwell upon that remarkable expression, "Judas also which betrayed Him knew the place," to show the futility of knowledge apart from sincerity, no, the injuriousness of knowledge if it is not attended with corresponding Grace. Had the traitor not known he could not have betrayed, and had he not been an intimate friend he could not have been so base a wretch. Strange, but strangely true is it, that the ability to become the child of perdition by betraying his Master was found in the fact of his having been the near acquaintance of the Savior. He could never have been so sevenfold an inheritor of Hell if he had not been so largely a receiver of the privilege of companionship with Christ.

Direful truth, that to be educated to take the highest degree in Hell it is almost necessary to enter hypocritically into the school of Christ. Terrible reflection, which should well check any of us who make high professions without a corresponding weight of sincerity. But as time does not allow us, like the bee, to gather honey from every flower, we shall dwell upon the text. In this passage *there is much instruction and we shall endeavor to draw it forth;* and then *we shall take the liberty to*

spiritualize it, to set the words in another sense in order that we may still be promoting our great objective of setting forth our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. When we observe the words of the text, we notice upon the very surface a sure proof of THE WILLINGNESS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST TO GIVE HIMSELF TO SUFFER FOR OUR SINS. The voluntary character of Christ's suffering makes it beam with a matchless splendor of love. He needed not to have died. If it had been His good pleasure He might have tarried gloriously among the songs of angels. He came not to earth to win a crown, because He had none, for all honor and glory are His by right. It was not to earn a dominion, or because He was not Lord of principalities and powers, that He descended from the skies: "Who though He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich." It was a disinterested mission upon which the Redeemer came to the abodes of sinful men. He had nothing to gain, rather He had everything to lose; and yet let me say to correct myself, by that losing He did gain, for now, as our Mediator, He is clothed with a special glory of unrivalled Grace, unequalled by any other manifestation of the Divine Perfections.

The proofs that the Master went voluntarily to His death are very abundant. He rose from supper when He knew that Judas had gone out to betray Him, and He did not seek a hiding place in the corners of Jerusalem, or retire to the calm retreat of Bethany. If He had chosen to ward off His betrayer's thrust that night and to wait until the day, the fickle multitude would have gathered around Him, and protected Him from His foes, for they would soon have been won to His side, if He would have consented to become their king. Instead of retreating even for a moment, Jesus, attended by His disciples, boldly advanced to the spot where Judas had planned to betray Him; He went as calmly as though He had made an appointment to meet a friend there, and would not be late when he arrived. He entered upon His terrible sufferings with His whole heart, with the full concurrence of His whole Being, having a baptism to be baptized with, and being straitened until it was accomplished. What true courage is in those words, "Arise, let us go from this place," when He knew that He was going to the Cross! When the band came to take Him, it appears that they did not know Him. "I am He." He said to them twice, "Whom do you seek?" He had to reveal himself, or the lanterns and the torches would not have discovered him. He was not after all taken by Judas' kiss; the kiss was given, but in the confusion they may have missed the token. Jesus had to ask, "Whom do you seek?" And He had to twice announce Himself plainly with the words, "I am He." He yielded Himself to His blood-thirsty foes, and went willingly with His tormentors. It is very clear that He went willingly, for since a single word made the captors fall to the ground, what could He *not* have done?

Another word and they would have descended into the tomb; another, and they would have been hurled into Hell. He put forth just that little finger of His potency in order to let them feel what He could have done if He had chosen to lay bare the arm of His strength, and to utter but one word of wrath against them. It is very sure that he went willingly, for how could He have gone at all if not with His own consent? There was no power on earth that could possibly have bound the Lord Jesus, had He been unwilling. He who said, "Let these go their way," and by that word secured the safety of all His disciples, it is certain could have said the same of Himself, and so have gone His way where He would. Men might as well speak of loading the sun with chains, or holding the lightning flash in bondage, or like the foolish king of old, fettering the wild uproarious sea, as to suppose that they could constrain the Lord of Life and Glory, and lead Him a captive against His will. He was led, and led bound too, but He could have snapped those bonds as Samson did the Philistines' bonds of old. There were other cords that bound Him, invisible to carnal sense; the bonds of Covenant engagements, the bonds of His own oath and promise, the bonds of His love to you and to me, my Brothers and Sisters, the mighty bonds of His marriage union to our souls which compelled Him, without a word, to yield Himself as a lamb to the slaughter. The willingness of Jesus! Let us see it clearly, and let us reverently adore Him for it. Blessed Master! You go of Yourself to die for us. No compulsion but that of Your own heart! Nothing brought You to the tomb but Your Almighty Love to us.

I do not intend to dwell upon this thought, but having brought it before you, the practical use of it is just this—Let us take care that our service of Christ shall ever be most manifestly a cheerful and a willing one. Let us never come, for instance, up to the place of worship unwillingly, merely because of custom, or because it is the right thing to do, which we would gladly avoid doing if we dare. Let us never contribute of our substance to the Master's cause with a grudging hand, as though a tax collector were wringing from us what we could not afford. Let us never enter upon Christian exercises as a slave would enter upon his labor, hearing the crack of the whip behind him; but let love put wings to our feet, and inspire our souls with a sacred willingness, that as the seraphs fly upon the high behests of Heaven, we may run upon our Savior's commands with as much swiftness as mortals can command. Let our duty be our delight. Let the service of Christ be a kingdom to us. Let us count it to be our highest gain to suffer loss for Him, and our greatest ease to be fully immersed in abundant labors for His sake. *His* willing sacrifice ought to ensure *our* willing sacrifice. The Savior bleeds freely like the camphor tree that needs no pressure—let us as freely, from our very hearts, pour forth our love and all the kindred Graces and deeds of virtue.

II. Turning from this thought, I beg you, secondly, to notice OUR LORD'S CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE IN THE HOURS OF HIS GREATEST DISTURBANCE OF MIND. "If you seek Me, let these go their way." That was intended, in the first place, to be *a preservation for His immediate attendants.* It is singular that the Jews did not surround that little handful of disciples, put them in prison, and then execute them in due season. If they had done so, where would have been the Christian Church? If they the first nucleus of Christianity had been destroyed, as it seems likely they could have been, where would have been the Church of later ages? But those words, "Let these go their way," very efficiently protected all the weak and trembling fugitives; why did not the soldiers capture John? He seems to have gone in and out of the palace without even a single word of challenge. Why did they not seize Peter? They were searching for witnesses, why did they not examine Peter under torture, as was the Roman custom, in order to have extorted from him some railing accusation against his Lord whom he so readily denied?

Where were the others? Timid, trembling folk, they had fled like harts and roes when they first heard the baying of the dogs of persecution; why were they not hunted down? The Jews did not lack for will, for afterwards they were gratified when James was killed with the sword, and pleased when Peter was laid in prison—why were they allowed to go unharmed? Was it not because the Master had need of them? The Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out upon them, and they were not yet fit to be martyrs; they were like green wood that would not burn; they were as yet unbroken to the sacred yoke of suffering, and not endowed with that Irresistible spiritual strength, which made them able to bear tribulation with rejoicing, and therefore that Good Shepherd, who tempers the wind to shorn lambs, tempered the wind to these young beginners.

Those words, "If you seek Me, let these go their way," were like coats of mail to them, or those fabled, invisible garments which concealed their wearers from their enemies. Under the more than bronze shield of their Lord's words, the disciples walked securely in the midst of the boisterous mob, and we find John and others of the disciples even standing at the foot of the Cross while those who gnashed their teeth at Christ and laughed at Him, and revealed their savage malice in a thousand ways, did not touch so much as a hair of their heads, or, as far as we know, utter one jest against them. The words of Jesus proved to be right royal words; they were Divine Words; and men were compelled to obey them. The Lord had said, "Touch not Mine Anointed, and do My Prophets no harm," and therefore, for the time, His disciples were safe.

It strikes me that the expression was not only a guard for the disciples for the time, but, as no Scripture is of private interpretation, I believe that *such a royal passport has been given to all Christ's people in the way of Providence.* Fear not, servant of Christ, you are immortal till your work is done. When you are fit to suffer, and if necessary, even to die, Christ

will not screen you from so high an honor, but permit you to drink of His cup, and to be baptized with His baptism; but until your hour is come, you may go and return secure from death. Though cruel men may desire your ill, and devise mischief against you, you are safe enough until the Lord shall be pleased to let loose the lion, and even then you shall suffer no permanent injury. It is amazing, in the lives of some of God's ministers, how strikingly they have been preserved from imminent peril. We cannot read the life of Calvin without being surprised that he should have been permitted to die peaceably in his bed, an honored man, surrounded by the town councilors and the great ones of the very city from which he had been once expelled. It seems astounding that a poor weak man whose body was emaciated with diseases of all kinds, who had no arms to wield against the furious hosts of Rome, should yet live in usefulness and then die in circumstances of peace and comfort. It is no less remarkable that the brave hero of the Cross, Martin Luther, should seem as if he had carried a safe conduct pass which permitted him to go anywhere and everywhere. He stood up in the Diet of Worms expecting to die, but he came out unscathed. He passed, as it were, between the very jaws of death and yet remained unharmed. Though, as I have said before, Christ has allowed many of His people to die for Him, and they have rejoiced to do so, yet, when He has willed to preserve any of His servants who were needed for a special work, as Calvin and Luther undoubtedly were, He had a way of taking care of them, and saying, "Let these go their way."

Take, for instance, another illustration, the life of our remarkable reformer, John Wickliffe. Many times his life was not worth a week's wages, and yet the old enemy of the saints were robbed of their prey, and could never touch a bone of him until years after he had been buried. When he was brought up for trial before the bishop at St. Paul's, it was a very singular circumstance that John of Gaunt should stand at his side, fully armed, proudly covering the godly man with the prestige of his rank and the arm of his power. When Wickliffe was faint with standing, and begged to be allowed to sit, the bishop tells him that heretics shall have no seats, but John of Gaunt with rough, uncourtly words swears that he shall sit when he wills, and when the time comes the good man goes forth through the midst of the rabble protected by his friend. I know not that John of Gaunt knew the Truth of God, but yet God touched the man's heart to protect His servant in the hour of peril. Vultures, when God has willed it, have protected doves, and eagles have covered with their wings defenseless children whom God would save. When the Lord wills it, if all Hell should shoot such a shower of arrows as should put out the sun, and if all those arrows were aimed at one poor heart, yet not a single shaft would find its mark, but all would be turned aside by an invisible but Irresistible Power from the man whom Jehovah ordained to save. We understand, then, that Jesus has issued a royal passport for all

His servants which enables them to live on in the midst of innumerable deaths.

Mystically understood, the words have a far deeper meaning. The true seizure of Christ was not by Romans or by the envious Jews, but by our sins; and the true deliverance which Jesus gave to His disciples was not so much from Roman weapons as from the penalty of our sins. How anxiously do I desire that those here this morning whose sins have been tormenting them would hear the voice of Jesus, "If you seek *Me*, let these go their way." *The Law of God* comes out to seek us who have violated it. It has many and just demands against us, but Jesus, who stood in our place, puts Himself before the Law, and He says, "Do you seek Me? Here I am; but when you take Me prisoner let these, for whom I stood, go their way." So then, Beloved, when the Law met with the Lord Jesus and made Him its servant, and compelled Him to bear its penalty, all those for whom Christ stood were by His being bound, absolutely and forever set free. Christ's suffering the penalty of the Law was the means of removing His people forever from under the legal yoke. Now let me try to apply that Truth to your case. A poor soul under distress of mind has gone to the priest, and the priest says, "If you would be pardoned do penance." While the poor soul is flogging his back and laying on the stripes most earnestly I think I hear the Savior saying to the whole tribe of priests, "Let these poor souls go their way. My shoulders have borne all *they* ought to have borne; My heart has suffered all the griefs that they were condemned to know. The chastisement of their peace was upon Me, and by My stripes they are healed. Let these go!" Put away your whip, cease from your bodily tortures, they are of no service! The Law has taken the Redeemer, it does not want you. You need not suffer, Christ has suffered, and all your sufferings will now be useless and in vain! Christ has paid the debt, no need for you to attempt it again.

Another poor trembler has been sitting under a legal ministry, and he has been told that if he would be saved he must keep the Commandments. He has, therefore, endeavored to forego this sin and the other, and as far as possible to be perfect in holiness. But he has made no headway; his soul is as much in bondage as ever, unsaved with all his exertions, destitute still of true peace notwithstanding all his good works. This morning my Master cries to the preacher who talks after this fashion, "Let these poor enslaved ones go their way. Do not preach to them salvation by their own doing. Do not tell them that they are to earn admittance to Heaven. I have worked out and finished their Redemption; their salvation is complete in Me. There is nothing for sinners to do to win forgiveness. All they have to do is to receive what I have done for them. All the righteousness they need to recommend them before God is My Righteousness, which requires not that theirs be added to it, for why should their rags be joined to my cloth of gold? All the merit a sinner can plead is the merit of My Passion. Why should they seek after merit

through their repentance and their good works? Why should such stagnant water be poured into the midst of the wine of My merit?" Away with your fancied good works, away with your boasts, your religious doings, your weeping, and your prayers, for if they are used as a ground of confidence instead of the work of Jesus Christ they are things of nothing, mere rottenness and dung to be cast upon the dunghill. Since Jesus was accepted and punished by the Law, sinners believing in Him are free from the Law's exactions and may go their way.

Perhaps there are some here in whose hearts the Law of God is making terrible confusion. You feel that you have broken the Law and that you cannot keep it, and now the Law is flogging you; it has tied you up as they tie up soldiers in the army to the stocks, and it has been laying on the great cat-o'-ten-tails to your back, the Ten Commandments of the Law, till you are smarting, smarting all over. Your whole conscience is troubled. Now the Lord Jesus Christ says to the Law, "Put away, put away that whip! Do not smite the sinner any more! Did you not smite *Me*, why should you vex him?" But, Sinner, the only way in which you can escape from the Law's whip is this—hasten to Jesus Christ. You *must* flee to Christ, you must trust in Jesus, and if you shall trust in Jesus He will cast His robe over you, He will lift up the broad shield of His merit and protect you from the shafts of the foe, so that you can say to the Law, "I am not under the curse of the Law now, for I have fulfilled it in the Person of my Surety, and I have suffered its penalty in the Person of my Savior—

"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."

Jesus Christ then, as He stands before the Law and is bound by the Law, and flogged by the Law, and crucified by the Law, and buried by the Law, says to you who trust in Him, "Go your way, the Law cannot touch you, for it has struck Me instead of you. I was your Substitute, and you may go free." Why you all know that this is simple justice; if another person shall have paid your debts, you are not afraid of being immersed again in those debts, are you? And if you are drafted for the army and a substitute has taken your place, you are not afraid of being drawn a second time, are you? So the Lord Jesus Christ is the Substitute for all His people, and if He was a Substitute for you, the Law has no further penal claims upon you. Christ has obeyed it; Christ has suffered its penalty; You may rejoice in the Law as being now to you a gracious rule of life, but it is not to you a yoke of bondage; you are not under it as a slave, you are free from its dominion; you are not under the Law, but you are under Grace. What a blessing is this!

Further, these words seem to me to bear such a meaning as this, that as we are delivered from legal exaction so are we also *delivered from all penal infliction*. I wish that some children of God were clearer on this

point. When you suffer tribulation, affliction and adversity, do not think that God is punishing you for your sins, for no child of God can be punished penally for sin. Let me not be misunderstood. A man is brought before God, first of all, as a criminal before a judge. You and I have stood there. Through Christ's blood and Righteousness we have been absolved and acquitted as before God the Judge, and it is not possible for the Law to lay so much as the weight of a feather upon us since we have been perfectly acquitted. In all the pains and sufferings which a Christian may endure, there is not so much as a single ounce of penal infliction. God cannot punish a man whom He has pardoned. But that criminal being pardoned, is then adopted into the family and becomes a child. Now, if he shall, as a child, offend against his father's rule, he will be chastened for it. Everyone can see the distinction between the chastening of a father and the punishment of a judge. If your child were to steal, you would not think of punishing that child in the light in which the judge would do it, who would commit him to imprisonment for having broken the law; no, you *chasten* your child yourself, not so much to avenge the law as for the child's good, that he may not do this evil thing again. So our heavenly Father chastens His people with the rod of the Covenant, but He never punishes them with the sword of vengeance. There is a difference between chastening and punishing. Punishing is from a judge; Christ has suffered all such punishment, so that no penal infliction can fall upon a soul that believes in Him; but we may have chastisement which comes to us as the result of a father's love, but not as the result of a judge's anger; we have felt such chastisement, and have reason to bless God for it. Our Lord Jesus says with regard to all legal penalty, "If you seek Me, I have borne it: let these go free."

Once more, this text will have its grandest fulfillment *at the last.* When the destroying angel shall come forth with his sword of fire to smite the sinner, when the gulf of Hell shall open and vomit forth its floods of flame, when the dread trumpet shall sound and shall make all ears to hear the Voice of an avenging God, Christ shall stand forth in the front of all the blood-bought souls that came to trust under the shadow of the wings of His Mercy, and He will say to Justice, "You have sought Me once, and you have found all you can ask of Me. Then let these go their way." And up the glorious steeps of the celestial hills the happy throng shall stream, singing as they pass through the gates of pearl and tread the pavement of transparent gold, "Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be Glory forever and ever!" Then shall the great freeing of the slaves take place because Christ was bound; then shall the deliverance of the captive come, because Christ slept in the prison house of the tomb. "If you seek Me, let these go their way." I would to God that some here would perceive that the way of deliverance is for the Lord Jesus to be bound in their place. Trust in Jesus, and it shall be so.

III. Thirdly, but very briefly, notice why our Lord exhibited this great care for His people; PONDER OVER HIS SAYING concerning them, "That the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, Of them which you gave Me I have lost none." Here is much of matter for thought at your leisure. Do you know that that text was a prayer? Now here it is made into a promise. What? Then is everything that Christ asks for guaranteed to His people, so that His prayer is God's promise? It is so.

Notice next that, verbally understood, this expression, which is quoted from the 17th of John, could only relate to the souls of God's people; but here it is taken as though it related to their bodies. From which I gather that we are never wrong in understanding promises in the largest possible sense. It is, I believe, a rule of law that if a man should get a privilege from the king, that privilege is to be understood in the widest sense; whereas a punishment, or penalty, is always to be understood in the narrowest sense. In the olden times, when princes and kings used to grant monopolies, if a king had granted a monopoly upon all kinds of foreign fruits, if the words had so run, you may rest assured that the person obtaining that monopoly would have put everything down as foreign fruit that could possibly bear the name, and he would have been justified by the law for doing so. Now, when the Great King gives a promise, you may encompass everything within its range which can possibly come under the promise, and we may be sure that the Lord will not run back from His word. God's words are never to be taken with a rebate, or discount, but with such blessed interest as your faith is able to put to them. The grant of Eternal Life includes such providential protections and provisions as shall be necessary on the road to Heaven. The house is secured for the sake of the tenant, and the body because of the soul.

There is also one more remark I cannot help making, namely, that this text is not in the form of a promise at all. "Of them which you gave Me *have* I lost none." It relates to the past, but here it is used as a reason why none should be lost of the present; from which I gather, that as Jesus has done in the past so will He act in the future, and that all He ever was to His people He will be to them forever more. We may look upon every past act of Divine Grace as being a token and guarantee of future Grace, and we may gather from all our experience of the Lord's goodness in the days that are gone, that He will do yet again unto us as He has done, and still more abundantly until we see His face in Heaven.

The gracious words before us read as follows: "Of all them which You have given Me I have lost none." Then some are given. There is an Elect nation. Oh that we may be found in that happy number! Then Jesus keeps those who are given; they cannot keep themselves, but He can keep them and will. He so well preserves them that not so much as one is lost. I have sometimes thought I might imagine such a scene as this at the gates of Heaven when the Great Shepherd comes to give His charge.

"Here I am," He says, "and the children which You have given Me." "But are they everyone brought safely here?" "Yes," says the Great Shepherd, "of all whom You have given Me I have lost none." "But where is Peter? Did he not deny You to Your face in the hall? Did he not three times say, "'I know Him not!'" "Yes, but I made him go out and weep bitterly, and then I washed him in My precious blood, and here he is," and Peter sings as sweetly as any. Then, perhaps, the question may be asked, "And where is such a one, the least of all the saints?" Brother, you feel yourself to be the weakest, the meanest, the most useless, but an inquiry will be made for you, and the answer will be, "He is here; of all whom You have given Me I have lost none." Oh, happy sheep in the care of such a Shepherd! Oh happy, happy hearts that can rely upon such a Keeper! Dear Hearer, is Jesus yours? Are you depending upon Him? Say, have you cast yourself upon Him? Then do not fear concerning your last days; it must be well at the last, if it is well now. If you are now in Christ, He never did cast away, any and He never will. Oh if you have but come to Him and are now depending on Him—

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep;
All that His heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep."

He suffered for you and therefore you shall go your way, and the Covenant shall be fulfilled. "Of those whom You have given Me I have lost none."

I have thus used the text as briefly as I could. I shall need your patience a few minutes while I apply this text in a sort of SPIRITUAL SENSE.

The first remark in this department of the subject is—*many seek Jesus but do not know who He is.* So that Christ says to them, "Whom do you seek?" Some here this morning are seeking rest, but they do not know that Jesus is the rest. You feel an aching void in your hearts. You are not happy, the theater does not give you the pleasure it once did. Somehow life has grown dull to you. There is a still small voice within your soul like the voice of wailing, like Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted. You are seeking you know not what. You have begun to read your Bible; you are eager to attend upon the preaching of the Gospel, but you do not know what it is you need. Ah well, it is a good thing to be a seeker; though you cannot tell what it is you need, if you do but desire and lift up your voice to God sincerely and earnestly, He will be found of you.

We now note the fact that *those who seek Christ will find Him,* but they find Him only because He reveals Himself to them. These men sought Christ to kill Him, yet He came and said, "I am He." There was a woman, if you remember, at the well of Sychar, who sought Him for a very different purpose. She said, "I know that Messiah comes, who is called Christ; when He is come He will tell us all things." And Jesus said, "I who

speak unto you am He." Whoever seeks Jesus, Jesus will show Himself to them. They came with lanterns and with torches, but they did not find Christ with lanterns and with torches. And you may come, dear Friend, with a great many of your own inventions, a great many fancies and imaginings, but you will not find Him. How could you expect to find the sun with a lantern? No. Christ must come and reveal Himself to you, and if you seek Him He will do so. Only continue to seek Him. Let not past disappointments make you leave off seeking. As long as you have breath continue in prayer. I charge you before the living God if you have sought in vain, do not let Satan make you give up; but ask that Christ would lead you in the right way, for if you did but know the right way you need not seek long for He is here now. Jesus can forgive this morning; before you leave that seat you shall have a full assurance of your interest in Him if you are led to understand the way of salvation. That way is simply to trust Christ, simply to believe that He can and will save you, and to trust yourself with Him. I will never believe that He will let a sincere soul go hungering and thirsting after Him, and let that soul die without Him; but though He may be pleased for a while to let that spirit wander even in apparent blackness and darkness, yet He will at the last lift the veil from His blessed face, and ah, the sight of that face will well repay you for all the sighs and cries with which you sought Him; and to hear Him say, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you," will so wake up the music of Heaven within your soul that you will think of the months of weariness and the nights of waiting as all too little, and more than enough repaid.

One thing more, *when Jesus is found, there is always much to be given up.* "If you seek Me, let these go their way." There are always many things that you will have to let go if you have Christ, and this is very often the testing point. If a man keeps a public house which he opens on Sunday, in which cursing and swearing abounds, if he has encouraged all sorts of vice, in order to increase his customers, can he continue in this and yet have Christ? Impossible! Now that man would like to go to Heaven, but if he would he must let go of his evil occupation. Yonder is a woman who has tasted the pleasures of sin. She would gladly have a Savior, but if she will have a Savior she must let her sins go. There is a young man over yonder, proud, vain, giddy; if he would have Christ, he must let all these evils go. Our sins must be abandoned or we cannot receive a Savior. Christ Jesus will pardon sin, but He will never dwell in the same heart with sin. Though you may have been as base as base could be, it can all be forgiven you now; but if you continue in it, there is no mercy for you. He who confesses his sin and forsakes it, shall find mercy; but not the man who with hypocritical lip bewails it, and then with vicious heart plunges into it again. "If you seek Me, let these go."

What? Can't you give them up? Silly companions, idle habits, foolish songs, pleasure-seeking, so-called, are these too dear to be renounced?

Really, some of the things which give pleasure to men nowadays are so absurd, so empty, so devoid of true wit that I wonder the swine do not revolt against the moldy husks which they are fed with nowadays. We cannot wonder that swine eat husks, it is natural they should, and we would not deny them their native food. If I were a swine, I think I should like to have husks that have some sort of substance in them, but the world's pleasure grows more and more dull and worthless, the pleasure of idiots rather than of men. Can't you give these poor things up? Are they such dear attractions, such precious things, that you let Heaven go, and Christ go, sooner than let them go? No, I hope it will be a voice of power to you, and that you will say, "My Savior, let them all go! What are they to me? I shall find thousands of times more pleasure and more profit too in following You than in following the best of them. So by Your Grace I let them go forever, and may they never entice me again."

Have you any self-righteousness remaining? Are you in your own conceit better than other people? Do you secretly trust in your works? Now if you want Christ, you must let all that go. Christ will tread the winepress alone, and of the people, there must be none with Him; and if you seek to be saved by Christ it must not be by the works of the Law, but by Grace alone. Would to God that there might be a clean sweep made in some of your hearts, and that you would come to Jesus all empty-handed as you are, and say, "Yes, Master, Your precious blood, Your triumphant Resurrection, Your effectual plea, these are our hope and these our joy. We would serve You in life, and bless You in death. Yours we are, Son of God, and all that we have! Take us and keep us, and Yours be the praise. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 18.

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THE ROOT THAT BEARS WORMWOOD
NO. 723

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 2, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood."
Deuteronomy 29:18.

THE people of Israel, after all the wonderful things which God had done for them, should have felt themselves bound forever to their father's God. They had received the clearest possible proof that Jehovah alone was the Living and True God. How could they debase themselves to worship graven images when they had seen such signs and wonders worked by their great I AM? Surely idolatry after such a history as theirs must have been sinful to the worst degree. They were, however, in great danger from two or three circumstances which in the Chapter before us are set before them as a ground of caution. "You know how you dwelt in the land of Egypt," is the first caution. They had dwelt so long in the midst of the idolatrous Egyptians, that it would have been strange if they had not become tinctured with the idolatrous spirit which was so powerful in the land of Ham. Alas, Israel's hosts drank deep into Egypt's superstitions, and not long had they been in the wilderness before they made a golden ox, contemptuously called by Moses a golden calf, in imitation of the ox so solemnly adored in Egypt. Probably the mixed multitude never wholly ceased from idol-worship, for we find it said in Amos, "Have you offered unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which you made to yourselves."

The Egyptians were infamous among all nations as almost indiscriminate worshippers of innumerable objects. They not only worshipped beasts, comely in proportion and useful to men, but they bowed down before the snake and the crocodile, and worshipped the beetle that is engendered from filth and the frog that comes up from the slime. "Oh, happy nation," says one of the old Satirists, "whose gods grow in their own gardens," for they actually bowed down before onions and leeks, as though these were the gods that made Heaven and earth! Knowing as we do that depraved nature is so strongly inclined to worship visible objects, we do not wonder that the disease of Egyptian idolatry infected the children of Israel.

Remember again, that in passing through the wilderness, all the people that Israel came in contact with for 40 years were idolaters. With

the exception of Moses' father-in-law, who may have been a priest of God, a spiritual worshipper, it does not appear that there were any tribes on the face of the earth that worshipped the Most High. When the children of Israel passed by Moab or Edom, or when they came into contact with the subjects of Sihon or Og, they found them all prostrate in the same reverence of idols, bowing down before abominations, idols of wood and silver and gold. We are all too much affected by our surroundings; the imitative faculty is very forcible, especially in a direction pleasing to our fallen nature; and when these people found themselves to be singular and alone, worshipping God whom they could not see, while their neighbors practiced gorgeous rites and mystic ceremonies, it is no wonder that they were strongly tempted to set up idols. Yet further, when they had passed through the 40 years in the wilderness, what kind of country were they to enter into? Not a land in which there was a Temple to Jehovah, and where the inhabitants would all assist them in cultivating the worship of the only true God, but a land that was full of idols, where every green hill was consecrated to a false deity, where the stones of the valley were piled up into a thousand altars, where every city had its own peculiar deity; the country was full of temptations to allure them from allegiance to the true God. Israel should have been faithful under every test, but he who knows what is in man will perceive the need of the heavenly caution, and of the warning of our text by which the Lord assured His people that to rebel against Him would be to plant a root that bears gall and wormwood.

Let us apply their history to ourselves. Remember the Egypt out of which we have been redeemed by mighty Grace! Remember the sins which once had the mastery over us! Do we wear no relics of our bondage? Is it so easy to shake off old habits? Is there no hankering after the flesh pots of worldly pleasure? I am sure we have to admit before the Lord's people that we are in very great danger from our former habits, and that the twitching of the old Adam are not things to be laughed at. Would not our evil hearts soon lead us back to our old slavery if the Grace of God did not prevent it? Look, moreover, at the people among whom we dwell. Is this vain world a friend to Divine Grace? Do you not, on the contrary, find it to be your perpetual foe? Why, you cannot go out into your trade, or follow your occupation, no, worse, you cannot even tarry at home without meeting with temptations. This world does not worship the true God; it bows down before gods of its own choosing; they may not be of wood or stone, but they are nonetheless dangerous. Men say unto their lusts or to their pleasures, to their persons, their intellects, their gains, "These are our gods; these are the pursuits which we count worthy of our immortal minds."

Are not Believers tempted to follow the same ends and objects? Does not our personal advantage frequently aim at the throne of our hearts?

Do we never find our losses, or our gains, endeavoring to thrust Jehovah from the rightful dominion of our souls? I am sure, Brothers and Sisters, from the oldest to the youngest, we all feel we are in peculiar danger from the people among whom we dwell. And will it be any better in the future? Have we any reason to expect that the places to which we shall journey between this and the hour of death will be any less full of temptation? May we not expect that as it has been, so it will be even till the end comes? May we not have to meet with temptations even more severe than those which we have encountered? May not the Providence of God call us into circumstances where we will pass through severer tests, and our piety have to endure yet heavier trials? It is probable it will be so. Until we reach our home in Glory, we shall have need to be often warned and put on our guard lest our evil hearts of unbelief should depart from the living God, and we should become as the rest of mankind are, a people who forget God, and that offer themselves unto strange lords, and follow their own devices.

These were the Lord's reasons for warning, and these are my motives this day for reminding you that sin is an evil and ruinous thing, "a root that bears gall or hemlock, and wormwood."

Sin, in the text, *is styled a root that produces bitterness.* This is our main thought this morning. If we have time *we shall institute the inquiry as to whether that root is in our hearts,* and then, thirdly, *we shall show the way of deliverance from the root and from its fruit.*

I. SIN IS THE ROOT WHICH BEARS GALL AND WORMWOOD. *That this was true in the case of the Israelites is very manifest.* Their history tells us the whole generation which came up out of Egypt died in the wilderness because of their sins. Their sin then was a root which bore to them the poisonous hemlock, for they left a line of graves along their line of march as a sad memorial of their iniquities, and only Joshua and Caleb ever entered into the Promised Land. At terrible intervals their sins bore fearful fruit for them. Sometimes the fiery serpents bit them; at other times the plague broke forth among the people, or the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the rebellious. We find them put to rout because of their sin at Ai although they had been victorious at Jericho, for Achan had hidden in his camp the accursed thing which was a root that bore to his nation wormwood and gall. After Israel had driven out the heathen nations they gave way to many forms of idolatry, and their land was invaded, and they were enslaved or driven into holes and dens; famine devastated the land, and pestilence laid it waste till the repenting people cried unto God in the bitterness of their sorrows, and He raised them up a Jephthah, or a Gideon, a Samson or a Barak, but on each occasion the mother of their sorrow was their sin, and the cause of their lamentation was their turning aside from their God.

Then came the days of the Kings of Israel, when the people for awhile feared the Lord, but at length the heart of the people went aside to the calves of Bethel and they were given over to Assyria, and carried away captive after being struck in innumerable battles and reduced to be the lowest of nations. Then remember what became of Judah, which was for a time faithful to God. The eyes of their king were put out and they were driven into cruel bondage far away from their much-loved land, having before their captivity been subject to sieges and famine so terrible that it is said that the woman who was tender and delicate among them did eat her own children by reason of the terribleness of the siege. After the Lord had pardoned them and brought them back again and given them a name once more among the nations, they revolted from Him again, they smote His Only-Begotten and crucified the Lord of Glory. And what did He do to them? It shall make both the ears of him who hears it tingle to read the story of the siege of Jerusalem written by one of themselves—Josephus. They were crucified till men lacked wood on which to crucify them; they were sold as slaves till men would not buy them at the price of one farthing each, for Jewish slaves had become so common and were so despised; the plowshare was driven over the very site of Jerusalem, and a mandate made that the Jew should never look towards that city. They were scattered and banished as they are unto this day. Truly the whole house of Israel is God's witness at this day that sin against Jehovah is a root that bears gall and wormwood.

As it was in their case we may rest assured it is in other cases, for God makes no exceptions in His dealings. He is not a judge who punishes one sin and allows another to go unpunished, for He deals equal justice to all men. If He spared not Israel, how shall He spare the Gentiles? If Jerusalem escaped not, how shall London escape? If He gave up to the spoiler and to the sword the seed of Abraham His friend, how shall He spare us in the day of His visitation, if we sin against Him?

Again, dear Friends, not only does the history of the Jews prove that sin is a root of bitterness, but our judgment tells us that it is most fitting it should be so. If sin were in the long run pleasurable, and really produced advantage to man, it would be a very strange arrangement in the Divine economy. The Judge of all the earth must do right, but would it be right that sinning should be rewarded with blessedness? If the root of sin, instead of bearing gall and wormwood, dropped with honey and streamed with milk, where would be the holiness of the great Governor who so ordained it? I would even venture to put this to the depraved intellect of those men who rail at Divine Justice; I would ask them what they would have? Would they have sin rewarded? Would they have virtue punished? If so, would not the devil be the most fitting ruler of such a dispensation? What sort of God could He be who would make holiness to bring forth misery, and sin to be the perpetual spring of delight? If any

one of us, not absolutely mad, could be put into the position of the governor of the world, as soon as we had made laws, would we not at once decree that the violation of law should involve punishment? Why whenever savages become semi-civilized and form themselves into a little state, one of the first things they do is, having made laws, to lay down penalties for the breach of those laws, and men cannot form a government without penal sanctions. I will defy men to do so. If they will reward the breach of their laws and punish those who keep them, it will not be long before a general revolt and universal mutiny will give the law to the winds. It was right then, and according to the natural order of things, that rebellion against the Law of the great moral Governor should, in the long run, if not at once, involve sorrow and misery.

This Truth of God is continually being denied, and yet is all but self-evident. As, I believe, this is the point of teaching which is just now more assailed than any other, namely, the Doctrine of the Future Punishment of Sin; I find it is become quite a popular thing to assert that we who preach of Hell and everlasting punishment libel the Character of God; as it is constantly asserted that this Doctrine is an old worn-out dogma, we beg to bring it before you once again as being, notwithstanding all the gainsayer may say, the Truth of God. Let no man deceive himself and think that sin will go unpunished. Let no man, be his speech ever so sounding true, but in reality a lie, and his words ever so flattering, lead you to imagine that in the next world God will pass by iniquity, for, as surely as this Book is His Word, sin is a most fearful evil, and the wrath to come will be terrible—so terrible that the hardest language ever used by the most vehement speaker falls infinitely short of what the Judgment of God will be when His Wrath smokes against the sinner, and His curse descends with full force upon the offender.

Sin is a root which has not always budded and blossomed in this life, but which will bud and blossom and bring forth its fruit in the life to come, and the fruit of sin will be more bitter than hemlock and wormwood. I gather this, first, *from my reason.* Let an intelligent person only think a minute, and I am sure he will be convinced that there must be a terrible punishment for sin. Remember, *there are other laws in the world besides moral laws*—there are what is called by the philosopher physical laws, that is to say, laws which concern matter rather than mind. Now, if men break *these* laws, *does any ill result follow from the violation?* For instance, the law of attraction, or gravitation; that certain bodies shall attract other bodies, can that be infringed without risk? Here is a man who says he does not believe in gravitation; he does not believe, for instance, standing here on this lofty rock, that he shall fall if he springs off into the air. He declares that he means to try the issue with that antiquated old law, and he laughs at Sir Isaac Newton, and everybody else. He says, "I am not to be bound by such a bugbear as this

law of gravitation; I am a freethinker, and am not to be led by the nose by your physical creeds." We warn him, "You will break your neck if you do." He says, "Do you mean to represent God to me as such a Being, that if I merely violate one of His laws He will actually put me to pain or even kill me? Do not tell me, I know better, and am not to be trammeled by the superstitions of the dark ages."

Yet let him say what he will, his leap will be fatal, and his life will pay the penalty of his rashness. If you rebel against gravitation it will crush you up as a man would a beetle, or a fly, and without a particle of pity will avenge its insulted authority. See the fool leap from the lofty crag into the air! Ah, unhappy wretch, there is no escape for him! Notwithstanding his religious belief that he would escape, we find him a mangled corpse at the bottom. The physical laws of God do not stay their action on account of the men who break them, but push on to their purposed end, let the results be what they may. Take another case. It is a law of Nature that filthiness shall beget disease. Over yonder a number of persons herd together in impure air; they never clean their bodies, or wash their clothes, they leave heaps of filth to rot outside the door, drainage is neglected, water is scarce and poisonous; the Sanitary Commissioner warns them—"My dear good people, if you do not alter this, you will have the fever or the cholera." "What? Do you believe," says a woman, "that God Almighty is so cruel that He will take away this dear little child from my bosom just because we do not happen to wash ourselves, but prefer to live in dirt and drunkenness?" "Yes," says the Sanitary Commissioner, "whatever you may think of it, that is the fact, that filth and vice will bring disease" "Well," says some babbling freethinker, "it is a very shocking doctrine—you slander God—I do not believe it!" Yet the Lord did permit the plague a few weeks ago, right and left, to slay its thousands. Who says it is a cruel decree, that foul air should make men sick? Nobody complains of the cruelty of God in His physical laws, although if men set themselves against them there is no sort of pity for them—the physical law goes on and stamps out all rebels against its power. Go to sea in a leaky ship, and see if when the storm comes the sea does not swallow you up without an atom of pity. Or stand under a tree when lightning is abroad, and if the lightning strikes that tree and you are under it, see if the lightning will care for you. You have violated the physical law—you may have done it ignorantly, but it has no pity, but just smites with all its force.

Now I say if this is a fact, which nobody can dispute, that the God of Nature is a terrible God, oh you who worship the God of Nature and say you do not care for the God of Revelation, I ask you what you make of all this? I ask you whether even Nature itself does not say to you, "If God so terribly avenges His ordinary physical laws when they are broken, how

much more surely will He avenge His *moral* Laws when men wantonly and wickedly throw themselves in their way"?

Again, we are not left to this argument alone, for *there is one out of the Ten Commandments,* to which I can only allude, *which involves more especially the bodies of men.* Now, when a man offends against the one Command, we shall see if God does really punish sin; we shall see in the man's body whether or not sin does produce gall or wormwood. I allude, of course, to the command, "You shall not commit adultery," which forbids all classes of lasciviousness and uncleanness. No sooner is this Law broken in any case than straightway man receives the recompense which is meet. The men or women who violate this precept soon find that they have not only done wrong to God but wrong to themselves. Our hospitals and asylums could tell you into what a fearful state men have brought themselves by sins of the flesh; states of body and mind so terrible that the very phrases in which Scripture speaks of future misery might, without exaggeration, be used in describing them. This is rather the physician's business than mine, but if this were the fit place and the fit time I could prove it, so that your very hair might stand on end. God forbid, that any of you should prove in yourselves the misery which this sin brings even on earth! Now, if the violation of this one Command which happens to touch the body, does, beyond all doubt, make men smart for it, if this one set of sins makes him feel that sin is as poison to the blood and the bones, if such is the case with one Commandment, why not with the rest? And as the other Commands, for the most part, do not seem to bring upon us a punishment here, it is rational to believe that they will bring it upon us in the next state, and as this is a state in which the body evidently suffers from the breach of one Command, it is natural to expect that in the next state the body and soul will suffer for the breach of the other nine.

I believe that every sin creates disease in the soul, that every sinful thought, and word, and deed poisons our spiritual nature; that sin is to be dreaded not merely because *God* will smite us, but because *sin itself* will plague us. If a man cuts himself he expects to bleed, and if a man sins he is wounding his soul, and his soul *must* bleed. If a man drinks poison, he must expect to have it lying in the system if it does not kill him outright, and if a man takes sin into his spirit it lies rankling within. This root will bear hemlock and gall, if not in this life yet in the life to come.

Still further, to bring out this argument. We have no reason to believe that death will change the character of man at all. I have no reason to believe that my dying, if I am a sinner, will make a saint of me. I certainly can have no thought that if I die as a saint death will make a sinner of me. A man might as well believe the one as the other, and they are both irrational. Death says, "He who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is

holy, let him be holy still." Then, a man dying as a sinner, when he gets into the next world, what will he do? Why, he will sin as he did here—not in the same shape, and way, but he will in some way go on sinning; he will die a sinner, rise a sinner, live a sinner, and forever live a sinner. Now, if he forever lives as a sinner, he will continue to get worse and worse in sin, for we all know that it is the nature of sin to grow worse, and sin has a self-developing power within itself. Now, if in the other life the man goes on sinning worse and worse, and even in this life we have many instances that sin brings misery, may we not rationally conclude from the Bible that increasing sin in the next life will bring forth increasing misery, which will be intolerable beyond all conception? I tremble as I see the drift of this line of thought; may you tremble, too, and fly to the Lord Jesus for pardon! Depend upon it, as long as a man goes on sinning the Law will necessitate that he shall be miserable. He is out of accord with the great moral forces, and he must as surely suffer as another man would do who perished in fighting with gravitation or any other physical law.

"Oh," cries one, "that is not the Doctrine we kick against, we speak against *God's* punishing sin!" But what if this should be the way in which sin is punished? What if it is written, "Evil shall slay the wicked." "You have destroyed yourself." If this is the way in which God punishes sin, even you who sin are compelled to say that it is right. Did anybody ever think it wrong that if a man tried to float upon a stone he should drown? Everybody says, "Why does the fool attempt it? It is a law of Nature that the stone should sink, why does he kick against it?" Nobody thinks it cruel that he should drown if he ties a millstone to his neck and leaps into the sea. If a man thrusts his hand in the fire, nobody thinks it cruel on God's part if that man's hand is burned. Now, the natural effect of the violation of a Divine Command is misery. Oh that men would believe it, and cast out the root which produces wormwood!

But we are not, happily, left to our reason about it; *we can turn to the Book of God, and call up the witnesses.* Ask Noah, as he looks out of his Ark, "Does sin bring bitterness?" And he points to the floating carcasses of innumerable thousands that died because of sin. Turn to Abraham—does sin bear bitterness? He points to the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah that God destroyed because of their wickedness. Ask Moses, and he reminds you of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who were swallowed up alive. Turn to Paul, and you do not find Paul speaking with the honeyed phrases of these modern deceivers who would make people believe that sin will not be punished! He says, "He who despised Moses' Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy who has trod underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done

despite unto the Spirit of Grace?" Listen to James or Jude, or Peter, and you hear them speak of chains of darkness and flaming fire. Hear John as he writes of the Wrath of God and of the winepress of it, out of which the blood flows up to the horse's bridles. Let the Savior Himself speak to you. He cries, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." He is the Author of those words, "Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." It is He who speaks of the outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. This Book is as opposite as light to darkness to the mawkish softness of modern heretical divinity which drivels against the just Judgment of God. It tells you, (and oh that you might hear it as God's own voice to you!)—it tells you not that sin will end in pleasure and joy, but that the wrath of God will abide upon you if you do not turn from sin; that the soul that sins, it shall die; that God's curse is upon the wicked, and that everlasting punishment is the portion of the impenitent. Dreadful as that Truth of God is, it is clearly revealed, and let it be received and trembled at!

Once again, whereas right reason shows it and Scripture confirms it, I believe that *conscience in every enlightened man asserts it.* I read the other day, in a lecture against this Doctrine, that Augustine was the author of the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment. It was a great piece of news, certainly; but we are further told that it was because he had been a great sinner, and therefore he felt such horror of conscience on account of sin that his mind was morbid, and he fancied that he deserved eternal punishment. Well, then, here I stand in the same position as Augustine, having been a great sinner too; and because of my great conviction of sin I also feel that sin deserves eternal punishment. And, dear Friends, I do not believe the witness of Augustine is at all weakened by his having had a clear sense of sin; on the contrary, I accept him as all the better witness because, having known what sin meant, and having felt its weight in his own conscience, he was better able to judge what sin deserved. It is strange that men should assert that because the man felt a great horror of sin, therefore he misjudged its desert. That would be the very reason why he should judge correctly, and if the gentlemen who oppose this Doctrine had any true sense of sin themselves, they would soon change their present views.

When my heart was awakened to feel the guilt of sin, I never quarreled with God upon the matter of punishment. I felt that, let God do what He will with me on account of sin, I deserved it all—I was compelled to bow my head, and not so much as lift my eyes to the place where He dwelt; but could simply say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." I had no thought to plead in court against the Divine Sentence; I agreed to it. But if there is a man before me who says that the Wrath of God is too heavy a punishment for his little sin, I ask him, if the sin is little, why does he not give it up? If it is such a little pleasure to you, why not renounce it? A

gentleman, a man of wealth, who is now dead, as I one day walked with him in his garden, took me by the button-hole and said, "What an awful thing, Sir, that I should fling my soul away for the sake of a little worldly mirth when I know that I shall have to smart in Hell for it forever!" He looked me through and through as he spoke to me, but after we had prayed together, and I had laid before him the way of salvation, I was pained to see that he had made his choice for the pleasures of sin. When a man deliberately does that, what can you say but that he must take his choice? If you know that Hell is so dreadful, and you pretend that your sin is so little, why do you choose your sin? Why do you not renounce it? I will take you on your own footing. You say the punishment is too severe for so small a pleasure; then why do you take the pleasure? The more terrible the punishment is, the more foolish is it on your part to run the risk of it for the sake of such a paltry gain. Sinner, I charge you by the terrors of Hell, do not buy sin at such a fearful price, but rather say, "I cannot sell my soul so cheaply; I must have something better than the gaiety of life to reward me for being cast away forever."

I put it yet again. The plan of salvation by Jesus Christ is very clear and very plain. It is, "Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Oftentimes our hearers say, "Oh it is so easy, so very simple—nothing to do but just trust in Christ." My dear Hearer, if it is so simple, why not receive it?—

"How they deserve the deepest Hell
That slight these joys above!
What chains of vengeance must they feel
That break these bonds of love!"

If to trust in Christ is so simple, how can you refuse to believe in Him? Why will you live an unbeliever when God Himself has said, "He who believes not shall be *damned*"? Oh, fly from unbelief, which is the root that bears gall and wormwood.

II. I must be very brief on the other two heads. IS THERE SUCH A ROOT AS THIS GROWING IN THE HEART OF ANY ONE OF US HERE? I am afraid there is; because upon looking at the text it appears that some have this root that will bear gall and wormwood in them who are not actually gross outward sinners—they are described as those who forget God. The verse from which the text is taken says of them, "whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God." Is there no heart here that is turned away from God? Very personally do I put this question to you all. Are you all followers of God? If your heart does not love God, the non-loving of God is that root which will bear for you the anguish of Hell. The non-loving of the Most High, even though you never curse or swear, even though you do not break the Sabbath, is that root that will bear gall and wormwood. Next we read of "men *seeking after another god."* Are you loving someone more than God? Are you living for money—is that your great objective? Are you seeking fame? Whatever it is to which you give

your whole life, that is your god. Is there no one here who is living for self? If so, though you may be outwardly most respectable people, if you are living for anything but God, that root will bring forth gall and wormwood. Ah, my dear Hearers, I feel as if my eyes would burst into weeping while I am talking to you. My head aches, my heart is burning as I think how many there are of you who are in this state. You are living for that which will bring forth to you the wrath to come. Do think of this. If I tell you what is not true reject it, but as God, my Master, has put it into my heart to speak it to you, take warning.

Again, this root is in every man who *disbelieves the penalty of sin.* The verse following the text speaks of one who said, "I shall have peace though I walk after my own heart." Are you saying that? If so, you have the evil root in your heart. There is no more sure sign of reprobation than callousness and carelessness, and if you are saying this morning, "Well, I will try it; I will have the pleasures of sin and will run all risks," then *you* are the person. I do not say that the root has blossomed yet, but you have it within, and as surely as God's Word is true, if you die in such a state, you shall forever know that this root produces nothing but gall and wormwood.

III. The last point was to be, HOW ARE WE TO GET RID OF IT? Is there a possibility of being delivered from the gall and wormwood? There is. As many as trust in Christ shall be rid of the gall and wormwood. How? Shall it be poured on the ground, so that you shall not drink it? No, it must be drunk; all the bitter results of sin must be endured. Sin produces Hell, and that Hell must be endured; but listen, Christ has drunk the gall and wormwood for every soul that trusts Him. He has drunk the gall and wormwood for you, if you trust Him now. Come and rest upon my Master, and you shall find that there is not a drop of gall nor wormwood left for you, for in the Garden and on the bloody tree Christ endured what you ought to have endured, and felt the full results of sin in His own Person which otherwise you must have felt.

"Well," you say, "thank God for that, but how can I cut up the root itself?" In order to escape the punishment of sin you must be saved from sin itself, and the way to it is this, you must deeply feel in your own soul that sin is a bitter thing. If you do not feel and acknowledge this you will never find mercy. My dear Hearer, if sin is a sweet morsel in your mouth, it will be bitter in your heart forever; and as long as you love sin you cannot love God. You must go to God and pray, "Lord, tear these sins out of me—do not leave one, neither a little or a great one." Mark me, you may talk what you will about believing in Christ, but if you love sin you will suffer for sin. Now, lay bare your heart before the Eternal One, and say, "O God, You see my sins, You see the evil I did love, I hate it now, Lord, help me to overcome it; let me not be the victim of my sins—

'The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,

Help me to tear it from Your throne,
And worship only Thee.'

As for the past, wash me in the blood of Your dear Son; as for the present, send Your Spirit down to write Your Law upon my heart."

I did want this morning to have pleaded with sinners; I had it in my heart to have put before you the blessing and the curse, and then to have said, "By God's Grace lay hold on Eternal Life, and let your sins go. Trust Jesus, and let the pleasures of the world go." But if *I* cannot plead with you, I will ask God the Holy Spirit to plead with your consciences afterwards. Sin cannot bring you pleasure. It cannot profit you in the long run. You may get a little money or pleasure now, but you will lose by it in the long run of eternity. If your existence were only on earth, I believe your happiness would be greatest by being a Christian, but this world is only the first step or two in a race that never has an end. May God the Holy Spirit influence your will that you may choose that which will endure, and not that which will be buried in the tomb. Oh by the frail character of life, by the certainty of death, by the Judgment of God, by His hatred of sin, by the flames that know no abatement though briny tears forever flow, fly away to Christ. Oh may you fly to Him now and find life in His death, healing in His wounds, and everlasting Mercy through His merits.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
DEUTERONOMY 29.

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HIS NAME—THE EVERLASTING FATHER
NO. 724

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 9, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The Everlasting Father."
Isaiah 9:6.

HOW complex is the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ! Almost in the same breath the Prophet calls Him a "Child," and a "Counselor," a "Son," and "The Everlasting Father." This is no contradiction, and to us scarcely a paradox, but it is a mighty marvel that He who was an Infant should at the same time be Infinite, He who was the Man of Sorrows should also be God over all, blessed forever; and that He who is in the Divine Trinity always called the Son, should nevertheless be correctly called "The Everlasting Father." How forcibly this should remind us of the necessity of carefully studying and rightly understanding the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ! We must not suppose that we shall understand Him at a glance. A look will save the soul, but patient meditation alone can fill the mind with the knowledge of the Savior. Glorious mysteries are hidden in His Person. He speaks to us in plain language, and He manifests Himself openly in our midst, but yet in His Person itself there is a height and depth which human intellect fails to measure. When he has looked long and steadily, the devout observer perceives in his Well-Beloved beauties so rare and ravishing that he is lost in wonder; continued contemplation conducts the soul, by the power of the Holy Spirit, into an elevation of delighted admiration which the less thoughtful know nothing of. So deep is the mystery of the Person of our Lord that He must reveal Himself to us or we shall never know Him. He is not discovered by research nor discerned by reason. "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona," said Christ to Peter, "for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto you." "When it pleased God," says the Apostle, "to reveal His Son in me."

Another Apostle asked the question, "How is it that *You* manifest Yourself unto us?" There is no seeing Jesus except by His own light. He is the Door, but no man opens that Door but Jesus Himself; for *"He* opens, and no man shuts; He shuts, and no man opens." He is the Lesson, but He is also the Schoolmaster. He is both Key and Lock, Answer and Riddle, Way and Guide. He is that which is to be seen, for we are to look unto Him, but it is by Him that we are enabled to see, for He gives sight to the blind. Let us then, dear Friends, if we really desire to

understand that most excellent of all Sciences, the Science of Christ Crucified, entreat the Lord Himself to be our Rabbi, and beg to be allowed to sit with Mary at the Master's feet. Be this our prayer, that "we may know Him," and be this our desire, that "we may grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," for "to know Him is life eternal," and to be taught of Him is to be "wise unto salvation."

The title before us is a somewhat difficult one. Some years ago I preached to you from "His Name—Wonderful"—(See Sermon #214, Volume 4—HIS NAME—WONDERFUL!—read/download, by God's Grace, all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons, and over 500 Spanish translations free of charge at www.spurgeongems.org.) I felt I could speak upon that with ease. We advanced as far as "Counselor," (Sermon #215, Volume 4), and then we halted a while. After a time we were led to preach upon "The Mighty God" (Sermon #258, Volume 5), but we have been somewhat diffident of our ability to open up this particular title today for there is a depth in it which we are not able to fathom. This morning I cannot pretend to dive into the profound depths of the Word, but can only skim the surface as the swallow skims the sea. Silver of deep learning and gold of profound thought I have none; but such as I have I give you. If my basket contains nothing more than a barley loaf and a few small fishes, may the Master of the feast multiply the food in the breaking, that there may be food convenient for His people.

It is necessary at the outset to observe that the Messiah is not here called "Father," by way of any confusion with Him who is pre-eminently called "THE FATHER." Our Lord's proper name, so far as the Godhead is concerned, is not the Father, but the Son. Let us beware of confusion. The Son is not the Father, neither is the Father the Son; and though they are one God, essentially and eternally, being forever One and Indivisible, yet still the distinction of Persons is to be carefully believed and observed. For the mere word "Persons" we do not contend; it is but a make-shift word, although we know not what better term to use; but the fact is all-important that the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father. Our text has no bearing upon the position and titles of the three Persons with regard to each other; it does not indicate the relation of Deity to itself, but the relation of Jesus Christ to us. He is to *us* "The Everlasting Father."

The light of the text divides itself into three rays—Jesus is *"Everlasting,"* He is a *"Father,"* He is *"The Everlasting Father."*

I. First, Jesus Christ is EVERLASTING. Of Him we may sing with David, "Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever." A theme for great rejoicing on our part. Rejoice, Believer, in Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Jesus always *was*. The Baby born in Bethlehem was united to the Word which was in the beginning, by whom all things were made. The

title by which Jesus Christ revealed Himself to John in Patmos was, "Him which is, and which was, and which is to come." "His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow," to betoken that He is the Ancient of Days—

"Before sin was born, or Satan fell,
He led the host of morning stars;
(Your generation who can tell,
Or count the number of Your years)?"

In His Priesthood, Jesus, like unto Melchisedek, "has neither beginning of days nor end of life." His pedigree is thus declared by Solomon—"When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills were I was brought forth; while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as One brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men." Think not that the Son of God ever commenced to be—

"Ere the blue heavens were stretched abroad,
From everlasting was the Word;
With God He was; the Word was God,
And must Divinely be adored."

If He were not God from everlasting, we could not so devoutly love Him; we could not feel that He had any share in the Eternal Love which is the fountain of all Covenant blessings. He must be Eternal who has a part in the Eternal Purpose. Since our Redeemer was from all eternity with the Father, we trace the stream of Divine Love to Himself equally with His Father and the blessed Spirit. We were chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world, and thus in our Eternal Election He shines forth gloriously. We bless and praise, and magnify Him that the name, "Son," does not at all import any time of birth or generation, or of beginning, but we know that He is as eternally the Son as the Father is eternally the Father, and must be looked upon as God from everlasting. He is "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."

As our Lord always *was*, so also He *is* for evermore the same. Jesus is not dead; He ever lives to make intercession for us. He has not ceased to be; He has gone out of sight, but He sits at the right hand of the Father. Of Him we read, "And, You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Your hands: they shall perish; but You remain; and they all shall wax old as does a garment; and as a vesture shall You fold them up, and they shall be changed: but You are the same, and Your years shall not fail." Jesus is as truly the I AM, as that Jehovah who spoke out of the burning bush to Moses, at Horeb! *He lives! He lives!* This is the foundation of your comfort, "Because He lives you shall live also." "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in time of need." Resort to Him in all your times of need, for He is waiting to bless you still. He is made higher than the heavens, but He still receives sinners, and effectually puts away their sins; and since "He ever lives to make intercession for them, He is able to save unto the uttermost they who come unto God by Him."

Jesus, our Lord, ever *shall be.* He could not be called "Everlasting" if it were supposable that He must one day cease to exist. No, Believer; if God shall spare your life to fulfill your full day of threescore years and ten, you shall find that His cleansing fountain is still opened and His precious blood has not lost its power; you shall find that the Priest who filled the healing fountain with His own blood still lives to purge you from all iniquity. When only your last battle remains to be fought, you shall find that the hand of your conquering Captain has not grown feeble, nor His arm waxed short; the living Savior shall cheer the living saint. Nor is this all, for when Death has taken you away as with a flood, and all the men of your generation have fallen like grass beneath the mower's scythe, Jesus shall live, and you, caught up to Heaven, shall find Him there bearing the dew of His youth; and when the sun's burning eye shall be dim with age, and the lamps of Heaven shall be paled into eternal midnight, when all this world shall melt as melts the winter's ice at the approach of spring; then shall you find the Lord Jesus still remains the perennial spring of joy, and life, and glory to His people! Living Waters you may draw from this sacred well! Jesus always was, He always is, He always shall be. He is eternal in all His attributes, and in all His offices, and in all His might, and power, and willingness to bless, comfort, guard, and crown His chosen people.

The connection of the word "Father" with the word "Everlasting" allows us very fairly to remark that our Lord is as Everlasting as the Father, since He Himself is called "The Everlasting Father," for whatever antiquity paternity may imply is here ascribed to Christ. According to our common notions, of course, the Father must be before the Son, but we must understand that the terms used in Scripture to represent Deity to us are not intended to be literally understood, and rendered in their exact terrestrial sense; they are only so far descriptive as they may be but do not compass the whole Truth of God, for human language utterly fails to convey the very essence and fullness of celestial things. When God condescends to speak to men, who are but as infants before Him, He adopts their childish speech, and brings down His loftiness of thought to the littleness of their capacities. Babes have no words for the thoughts of senators and philosophers, and such matters must be stated in childish language if babes are to know them, and then the statement must inevitably fall far short of the great fact. The relation between the Father and the Son is a case in point; it is not precisely the same as the relation between a father and a son on earth, but that happens to be the nearest approach to it among men. We must beware of stretching and straining the Word in its letter, especially in points where it would make us err from the spirit of the Truth. Christ Jesus is as Eternal as the Father, or He would never have been called "The Everlasting Father."

It is the manner of the Easterns to call a man the father of a quality for which he is remarkable. To this day, among the Arabs, a wise man is called "the father of wisdom," a very foolish man "the father of folly." The predominant quality in the man is ascribed to him as though it were his child, and he the father of it. Now, the Messiah is here called in the Hebrew "The Father of Eternity," by which is meant that He is pre-eminently the possessor of Eternity as an attribute. Just as the idiom, "the father of wisdom," implies that a man is pre-eminently wise, so the term, "Father of Eternity," implies that Jesus is pre-eminently Eternal; that to Him, beyond and above all others, Eternity may be ascribed. No language can more forcibly convey to our minds the Eternity of our Lord Jesus. No, without straining the language, I may say that not only is Eternity ascribed to Christ, but He is here declared to be the Parent of it. Imagination cannot grasp this, for eternity is a thing beyond us; yet if eternity should seem to be a thing which can have no parent, be it remembered that Jesus is so surely and essentially Eternal, that He is here pictured as the Source and Father of eternity. Jesus is not the Child of eternity, but the Father of it! Eternity did not bring Him forth from its mighty deep, but He brought forth eternity. Independent, self-sustained, uncreated, eternal existence is with Jesus our Lord and God.

In the highest possible sense, then, Jesus Christ is "The Everlasting Father." I will only pause one minute to draw a practical inference from this Doctrine. If our Immanuel is indeed Eternal and Ever-Living, let us never think of Him as One dead, whom we have lost, who has ceased to be. What could be a greater sorrow than the thought of a dead Christ? He *lives*, and lives to care for us. He lives in all the attributes which adorned Him upon earth, as Gentle and Kind and Gracious now as He was then. Come to Him, Christian, rest upon Him now, just as if He were visible in this place, and you can whisper into His ear your troubles, and confess your sins at His feet. He is here spiritually—your eyes cannot see Him, but faith will be better evidence to you than eyesight. Trust Him now with your cares! Rest upon Him in your present difficulties! And you, poor Sinner, if Christ were on this platform would you not come and touch the hem of His garment, and cry, "Jesus, let Your pitying eyes look on me and change my heart"? Well, dear Friend, Jesus lives; He is the same today as He was in the streets of Jerusalem; and though your feet cannot bear you to Him, yet your desires shall serve you instead of feet; and though your fingers cannot touch Him, your confidence shall be a hand to you. Trust Him now! He whose Love made Him die lives on. His precious blood can never lose its power. Come now, humbly come, and confide in "the Everlasting Father."

II. We come, in the second place, to the difficult part of the subject, namely, Christ being called FATHER.

In what sense is Jesus a Father? Answer, first. He is *federally* a Father representing those who are in Him, as the head of a tribe represents his descendants. The Apostle Paul comes to our help here, for in the memorable Chapter in Corinthians he speaks of those who are in Adam, and then he talks of a Second Adam. Adam is the father of all living; he federally stood for us in the Garden, and federally fell and ruined us all. He was the representative man by whose obedience we should have been blessed, but through whose disobedience we have been made sinners. The curse of the Fall comes upon us because Adam stood in a relation towards us in which none of us stand towards our fellows. He was the representative head for us; and what a fall was there when he fell, for every one of us in his loins fell in him. "In Adam all die." Since his day there has been but one other father here to the human race federally. It is true, Noah was the father of the present race of men, for we have all sprung from him; but there was no Covenant with Noah in which he represented his posterity, no condition of obedience by which he might have obtained a reward for us, and no condition of disobedience for the breach of which we are called to smart. The only other man who is a representative man before God is the Second Adam, the Man Christ

Jesus, the Lord from Heaven. Brothers and Sisters, we mournfully call Adam father, for we are cast out of Eden by him, and we till the ground with the sweat of our face; in sorrow did our mothers bring us forth, and to the grave in sorrow must we go; but we who have believed in Jesus call another Man Father, namely, the Lord Jesus; and we speak this not sorrowfully but joyfully, for He has opened the gates of a better Paradise; He has taken away the sweat of toil from our faces spiritually, for we who have believed do "enter into rest." He has borne Himself the pangs which were brought upon us by sin, He took our sicknesses and bore our sorrows; while death itself, the heaviest affliction, He has overcome, so that he who lives and believe in Him shall never die, but pass out of this world into the life celestial.

The grand question for us is this, Are we still under the Old Covenant of Works? If so, we have Adam as our father, and under that Adam we died. But are we under the Covenant of Grace? If so, we have Christ as our Father, and in Christ shall we be made alive. Generation makes us the sons of Adam; Regeneration acknowledges us as the sons of Christ. In our first birth we come under the fatherhood of the fallen one; in our second birth we enter into the fatherhood of the Innocent and Perfect One. In our first fatherhood we wear the image of the earthy; in the second we receive the image of the Heavenly. Through our relation to Adam we become corrupt and weak, and the body is put into the grave in dishonor, in corruption, in weakness, in shame; but when we come under the dominion of the Second Adam we receive strength, and quickening, and inward spiritual life, and therefore our body rises again like seed sown which rises to a glorious harvest in the image of the Heavenly, with honor, and power, and happiness, and Eternal Life.

In this sense, then, Christ is called Father; and inasmuch as the Covenant of Grace is older than the Covenant of Works, Christ is, while Adam is not, "The Everlasting Father." And inasmuch as the Covenant of Works, as far as we are concerned, passes away, being fulfilled in Jesus, and the Covenant of Grace never passes but abides forever, Christ, as the Head of the New Covenant, the federal representative of the great economy of Grace, is "The Everlasting Father." Secondly, Christ is a Father in the sense of a *Founder*. You know, perhaps, or at least you readily remember when I remind you, that the Hebrews are in the habit of calling a man a father of a thing which he invents. For instance, in the Fourth Chapter of Genesis, Jubal is called the father of such as handle the harp and organ; Jabal was the father of such as dwell in tents, and have cattle; not that these were literally the fathers of such persons, but the inventors of their occupations; and Jabal first took upon himself a nomadic tent life, and set the example of wandering about with flocks

and herds; and Jubal first put his fingers to musical strings, and his lips to pipes from which the wind is breathed melodiously.

The Lord Jesus Christ is in this sense the Father of a wonderful system. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, who brought Life and Immortality to light, and introduced a new phase of worship to this world is, in that respect, a Father—He is the Father of all Christians, the Father of Christianity, the Father of the entire system under which Divine Grace reigns through His Righteousness. Jesus is the Father of a great *Doctrinal system*. All the great Truths which we are in the habit of delivering in your hearing as the precious Truths of God sent down from Heaven fell first, clearly and powerfully, from the lips of Jesus. These things were dimly hinted at in the ceremonies of the Law, but Christ first of all put them into plain letter so that he who runs may read them. Practically it is Jesus who teaches us the Doctrine of Electing Love; it is Christ who reveals to us Redemption by blood; it is Christ who reveals Regeneration by the work of the Spirit, saying plainly, "You must be born-again." It is Christ who reveals the Perseverance of the saints. In fact, there is no Doctrine of the Christian system which is not so clearly set in the Light of His own glorious Spirit by His teaching that we may not fairly call Him the Father of it.

Our great Master is also the Father of a great *practical* system. If there are any in the world who "love their neighbors as themselves," the Man of Nazareth is their Father; for, albeit that the Law signified all that, yet men had not discovered it, but had misread the Law. "Eye for eye and tooth for tooth" was their version of Law, but Christ comes and says, "I say unto you, Resist not evil; if any man smite you on the one cheek, turn to him the other also." If any man can suffer with patience and can return good for evil, heaping coals of fire upon the head of his foes, this man is a child of Christ. If men worship God in the spirit and have no confidence in the flesh, if they know no holy place, but recognize every place as holy where a holy man is found, such are the true children of Christ, for He said, "They who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth." He is the Father of spiritual worship. It has been common to call Socrates the "father of philosophy." Jesus is Father of the philosophy of salvation; Galen the "father of medicine," Jesus is Father of the medicine of souls; Herodotus the "father of history," but Jesus is the Father of Heaven on earth. He is the Father of disinterested living, of true love to men; He is the Father of forgiving one's enemies, the Father, in fact, of the Divine system of Christian life.

The system of salvation claims Christ to be its Father. Whoever said, "By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"? Who but the Apostle of this Man, Christ Jesus? Who

told men that it was not by works of righteousness which they had done, but by the merit of His Passion and His life that they were saved? Who revealed the way of faith to men but Christ, the great Doctrine of, "Believe and live"? And those who receive it may claim Christ as Father. He is the Father of the Christian faith—a faith, my Brothers and Sisters, which has done much already for the world, for in old Rome it put down the fights in the Coliseum, threw down the bestial gods of heathendom, and albeit that it is doing much for the world even now, and helping to purge the vast Augean stable of humanity, it is to do more still; it is to cast out war, it is to destroy error, it is to regenerate the human race. The Father of this purifying system which is Doctrinal and practical, and which has already worked the best results for men, is the Lord Jesus, and since it was devised of old, and will be prolonged as long as the world stands, He is called "The Everlasting Father."

III. Now, there is a third meaning. The Prophet may not so have understood it, but we so receive it, that Jesus is, in the third place, a Father in the great sense of a *Life Giver.* That is the main sense of "father" to the common mind. Through our fathers we are called into this world. Now it is by Christ that there is a communication of Divine Energy to the soul; it is through Him, through His teaching, through the Spirit that He has given, through the blood that He has shed, that life is given to those who were dead in trespasses and sins. He who sits upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new." "This is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." "For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them, even so the Son quickens whom He will. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they who hear shall live. For as the Father has life in Himself; so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself." We know that through Jesus Christ the Divine Life is given to us. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." He gives the Living water, and then it is in us "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." He is that living grain of wheat which was cast into the ground to die, that it might not abide alone, but become a root that brings forth fruit, which fruit we now are, receiving life from Him as the stem receives life from the seed from which it sprang. Jesus is our Father in that sense. It is the Spirit of God who operatively quickens the soul and makes us live, but Jesus Christ's Gospel is the channel through which the Spirit works, and Jesus Christ is the true Life to us. Receiving Christ we receive life, and without Him we cannot have life. "He who has

the Son has life; he who has not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

As through the energy of Adam this vast world is peopled till hill and dale are covered with a teeming population, so through the life-energy of our Lord Jesus Christ the plains of Heaven and the celestial hills shall be peopled with a throng that no man can number. Out of every realm, and people, speaking every language, having been bronzed by the heats of the torrid zone, or frozen amidst the frosts of the frigid north, Christ shall find a people into whom His Quickening shall come, and they shall live through the energy of His Spirit, and He shall be their Everlasting Father. It is in this sense, because that life is everlasting and can never die out, that Jesus Christ is called "The Everlasting Father."

Everything in us calls Christ, "Father." He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. If we love Him, it is because He first loved us. If we patiently endure, it is by considering "Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." He it is who waters and sustains all our Graces. We may say of Him, "All my fresh springs are in You." The Spirit brings us the water from this Well of Bethlehem, but Jesus is the Well itself. Spring up, O Well! Spring up, O Well! Divine Father, blessed Jesus, prove Your Fatherhood by re-quickening our souls this morning according to Your Word!

IV. Fourthly, I do not think that we have yet come to the bottom of this title of "Everlasting Father." The term implies that Jesus Christ is to be in the future, *the Patriarch of an age.* Many translators render the passage, "The Father of the Future Age." So Pope in his famous Poem of the Messiah understands it, and calls Him, "The Promised Father of the Future Age." It has been the custom with men to speak of ages as "the age of brass or iron," and "the age of gold." This age of gold we are always looking for; the world's face is constantly turned to it; so much so that quacks play upon the simplicity of men and tell them when this golden age is coming, and fleece them of their pence, and sometimes of their pounds under the notion that they can tell them somewhat about the good times which are coming. They know nothing about it whatever; they are blind leaders of the blind—but this one thing is clear to everyone who cares to see it, namely, that such an age of gold *shall* come, that a period far brighter than fancy paints will dawn upon this poor, darkened, enslaved world. I am always jealous with a godly jealousy lest you should forget this Doctrine, or throw it up in disgust because of the shameful way in which it is made merchandize of by others. Brothers and Sisters, calculate no dates, sit down to devise no charts, but in your heart be satisfied with this, that *there will be* a Kingdom and a reign, and that in that Kingdom there shall be no strife to vex the nations, there shall be no

affliction to grieve the people; in that Kingdom, Jesus, the King, shall be conspicuous, and His Glory shall be the light of all the inhabitants; it shall be a New Jerusalem coming down from Heaven, prepared by God, as a bride is prepared for her husband, worthy of her Lord, and a meet recompense for the crown of thorns, for the flagellation of His shoulders, for the shame, the spitting, and the Cross.

Lift high the Cross, my Brothers and Sisters, for it *shall* be lifted high. Speak not of Christ with bated breath, for He comes to be a King. You Christians, think not yourselves, though despised and rejected of men, to be men of a mean birth, for "it does not yet appear what you shall be; but we know that when He shall appear you shall be like He, for you shall see Him as He is." Joyfully drink the cup of bitterness, for you shall soon drink the wines on the lees well refined; cheerfully pass through the darkness, for the morning breaks, and the day dawns, and the shadows flee away. Be content to have the offscouring of all things, for one day, when kings shall bow down before *Him*, and all nations shall call Him blessed, you shall partake in His honor, and shall be as princes upon the throne with Him. Yes, He is to be the Father of a future age. Men have called certain great patriots the fathers of their country. Today let us call Christ the Father of our world. O Jesus, You have given to earth far better than a creation. You have not only formed it from chaos into order, and then brought it from darkness into light, and then from death into warm life and beauty, but You have recovered it from worse than pristine chaos, and saved it from a darkness worse than the primeval gloom, and a death more horrible than the primeval shades. You have descended into the depths into which this pearl, the world, was cast, and like a mighty diver all the waves and billows have gone over You, but You have come up again bringing this pearl with You, and it shall glisten in Your crown forever when You shall be admired of angels and adored of all created spirits. This shall be the sweetest part of their admiration and their adoration, You were slain and have redeemed *us* unto God by Your blood, and therefore unto You be Glory forever and ever. He shall be in this sense, then, the Father of an everlasting age.

V. Once more—for the text is very prolific—Christ may be called a Father *in the loving and tender sense of a Father's office.* Here is a text to show what I mean. God is called the Father of the fatherless, and Job, I think, says of himself that he became a father to the poor. You know what it means, of course, at once; It means that he exercised a father's part. Now, albeit that the Spirit of adoption teaches us to call God our Father, yet it is not straining truth to say that our Lord Jesus Christ exercises to all His people a Father's part. According to the old Jewish custom the elder brother was the father of the family in the absence of

the father; the first-born took precedence of all, and took upon him the father's position; so the Lord Jesus, the First-Born among many Brethren, exercises to us a Father's office. Is it not so? Has He not succored us in all time of our need as a father succors his child? Has He not supplied us with more than heavenly bread as a father gives bread unto his children? Does He not daily protect us? No, did He not yield up His life that we, His little ones, might be preserved? Will He not say at the last, "Here am I, and the children that You have given Me; I have lost none"? Does He not chastise us by hiding Himself from us, as a father chastens his children? Do we not find Him instructing us by His Spirit and leading us into all Truth? Has He not told us to call no man father upon earth in the sense that He is to be our true Guide and Instructor, and are we not to sit at His feet and make Him our Rabbi and our authoritative Teacher? Is He not the Head in the household to us on earth, abiding with us, and has He not said, "I will not leave you orphans (that is the Greek word); I will come unto you"?

As if His coming were the coming of a Father. If He is a Father, will we not give Him honor? If He is the Head of the household, will we not give Him obedience, and say in our hearts, "Other lords have had dominion over us, but from now on, Everlasting Father, we will give You reverence"? If He is, in all these senses, "The Everlasting Father"—

"Then let us adore and give Him His right,
All glory and power, and wisdom and might,
All honor and blessing, with angels above,
And thanks never-ceasing, for Infinite Love."

VI. Lastly, we weigh the words, "EVERLASTING FATHER." I have already explained what this means. Christ is called, "The Everlasting Father" because He does not Himself, as a Father, die or vacate His office. He is still the Federal Head and Father of His people; still the Founder of Gospel Truth and of the Christian system; not allowing archbishops and popes to be His vicars and to take His place. He is still the true Life-Giver from whose wounds and by whose death we are Quickened; He reigns, even now, as the Patriarchal King; He is still the loving family Head; and so, in every sense, *He lives as a Father.* But here is a sweet thought. He neither Himself dies, nor becomes childless. *He does not lose His children.* If His Church could perish He would not be the Father. How a Father without a son? And this is the best of all, that He is "The Everlasting Father" to all those to whom He is a Father at all. If you have entered into this relationship so as to be in union with Christ, and to be covered with the hem of His garment, you are His child, and you shall forever be. There is no unfathering Christ, and there is no unchilding us. He is everlastingly a Father to those who trust in Him, and He never does, at any one moment, cease to be Father to any one of

these. This morning you may have come here in trouble, but Christ is still your Father. This day you may be much depressed in spirit and full of doubts and fears; but a true father never ceases, if he is a father, to exercise his kindness to a child. Nor does Jesus cease to love and pity you. He will help you. Go to Him, and you shall find that loving Friend to be as tender as in the days of His flesh.

He is the *Author of an eternal* system. As I glanced at the words, "Everlasting Father," and thought of Him as the Founder of an ever-living system, I said to myself, "Ah then, the Christian religion will never die out!" It is not possible that the Truth as it is in Jesus should ever be put away if He is "The Everlasting Father." I feel as if I should quote again Master Hugh Latimer, when, standing back to back with Ridley, "Courage, Master Ridley," he said, "we shall this day light such a candle in England as shall never be put out." Look yonder at Christ on the Cross! He did that day light such a candle as never can be put out! He is "The Everlasting Father." He set rolling that day, as it were, a snowflake of Truth as He died upon the Cross; and you know what the snowflake does upon the high Alps; a bird's wing, perhaps, sets it rolling, and it gathers another and another and another, till, as it descends, it becomes a mass of snow; and by-and-by, as it leaps from crag to crag, it grows larger and larger and larger, until ponderous masses of ice and snow cohere together, and at the last, with an awful thundering crash the avalanche rolls down, fills the valley, and sweeps all before it. Even so this Everlasting Father on the Cross set in motion a mighty force which has gone on swelling and increasing, gathering to be a ponderous mass of mighty teaching, and the day shall come when, like an irresistible avalanche, it shall fall upon the palaces of the Vatican and upon the towers of Rome, when the mosques of Mohammed and the temples of the gods shall be crushed beneath its stupendous weight, and The Everlasting Father shall have done the deed.

"The Everlasting Father," last of all, because He is the Father, in all His people, of Eternal Life. Adam, you are a father, but where are your sons? If you could return to earth, O Mother Eve, where would you find your children? I think I see her as she paces round the earth and finds nothing but little grassy mounds, heaps of turf, and sometimes a valley sodden blood-red where her children have been slain in battle. I hear her weeping for her children; she will not be comforted because they are not! But hush, Mother Eve, what life did you give them? What life was that which Father Adam conferred upon your sons and daughters? Why, only life terrestrial, a bubble life, that melted and disappeared. But Jesus as He comes again will find none of His children dead, none of His sons and daughters lost; because He lives they live also, for He is The Everlasting

Father and makes those to have Everlasting Life who live and breathe through Him. Thrice happy they who have an interest in the truth of our text!

Now, dear Hearers, may I ask you whether Christ is The Everlasting Father to you? There are other fathers. The Jew said, "We have *Abraham* as our father," and to this day certain theologians teach that we have covenant rights because of our earthly fathers. They believe in the Abrahamic Covenant much after the manner of the Jews. "We have Abraham as our father"—therefore we have a right to baptism, therefore we are church members; "born into the church." Yes, I have heard it said, "born into the church." Let no man deceive you; this is *not* Christ's teaching. "You must be born-again." If not, though your mother were a saint in Heaven, and your father an undoubted Apostle of God, you should derive no advantage, but a world of solemn responsibility from the fact, unless you are *yourself* born-again. Do not then say unto yourself, "we have Abraham as our father," for God is able of the very stones to raise up children unto Abraham. We had a very remarkable instance not very long ago in this Tabernacle of how God does sometimes bless the outcasts and leaves some of you, the children of godly parents, in the hardness of your heart to perish. There was a man known in the village where he lives by the name of Satan, because of his being so thoroughly depraved. He was a sailor, and as another sailor in that town had been the means of the conversion of all the sailors in a vessel that left the town, this man desired to sail with him to try and beat his religion out of him. He did his best, but he signally failed, and as they happened to be coming to London, his friend asked him whether he would come to the Tabernacle. He did not mind coming to hear me, for, as it happened, I was brought up near the place where he lived.

This Satan came here on a Lord's Day morning, when the text was upon soul murder—(See Sermon #713, Volume 12—SOUL MURDER—WHO IS GUILTY—read/download, by God's Grace, all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons, and over 500 Spanish translations free of charge at www.spurgeongems.org.) and he sat (some of you noticed him that day), and sobbed and cried under the sermon at such a broken-hearted rate that he could only say, "People are noticing me, I had better go out;" but his companion would not let him go out, and that man from that day forth was begotten by the Everlasting Father, and is living and walking in the Truth of God, an earnest Believer, doing all that he can for the spread of the Kingdom of God, and singularly clear in his Doctrinal knowledge. Here is a man who had been everything that was possible in the way of evil, yet God met with him; and some of you who have Abraham as your father, and are related to godly people, are just all the more hardened for all the preaching you have heard! May God have pity

upon you and save you yet! Do not be content with fleshly fatherhood; get the *spiritual* fatherhood which comes from Christ.

Others of you are this day perhaps saying, "Well, we can trust in our good works." Well, then, *Adam* is your father, and you know what will come of you. Adam was driven out of Paradise, and you will never be admitted there. Adam lost all his hopes, and you will lose yours. On the ground of the Law shall no flesh living be justified. Alas, I fear that many here have another father. How does Christ put it? "You are of your father, *the devil,"* says He, "for his works you do." Not works merely of open sin in the form of adultery, uncleanness, theft, and such like, but opposition to Christ is peculiarly a work of the devil, and unbelief in Christ is the devil's masterpiece! If you do not then trust the Lord Jesus, do not say tonight when you kneel at your bedside, "Our Father, which are in Heaven," for *your* father is *not* in Heaven—your father is in Hell. Go to the blood of Jesus and ask that you may be cleansed from all iniquity, and then may you say through The Everlasting Father, "O God, You have made me Your child, and I love and bless Your name." May God be pleased to give you all His blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 9.

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A MESSAGE FROM GOD TO HIS CHURCH AND PEOPLE
NO. 725

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 16, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"O Lord, I have heard Your speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy."
Habakkuk 3:2.

"O LORD, I have heard Your speech!" This is the language of reverent obedience, and is a fit preface to a fervent prayer. If we are not willing to hear God's voice, we cannot expect Him to hear our voice. It is an admirable preparation for prayer, first to listen diligently to what God the Lord shall speak, and then to be obedient to His commands. He who would hear God speak needs not to wait long, for God speaks to men continually by *the Scriptures,* which are given to us by Inspiration. Alas that we should be so deaf to its teachings! This wonderful Volume, so full of wisdom, is so little read that few of us could dare to gaze upon its pages and say, "O Lord, in this Book I have heard Your speech." At other times, the Lord speaks by *Providence;* both national Providences and personal Providences have a meaning; Providences that are afflicting, and Providences which are comforting all have a voice; but, alas, I fear that oftentimes to us Providence is dumb because we are deaf. How often, in our stubbornness, we are like the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, and when God speaks to us we do not regard Him; He therefore multiplies our afflictions, and holds us in with the bit and bridle of adversity, because we will not be governed by gentler means. Look, my Brothers and Sisters, at the Providence of God throughout the whole of your lives, and I am afraid few of you can say of it, "O Lord, in Providence I have heard Your speech."

The God of Heaven speaks to men by His *Holy Spirit.* He does this, at times, in those common operations of the Spirit upon the ungodly which they resist as did also their fathers. The Spirit strives with men; He calls, and they refuse; He stretches out His hands, and they regard Him not. The unregenerate man is like the deaf adder that will not hear, charm we ever so wisely. Even when the Holy Spirit speaks to us His people, we are not always willing and obedient; and though we have ears to hear, we frequently quench the Spirit; we grieve Him, we neglect His warnings, and, if we do not despise His teachings, yet too often we forget them, and listen to the follies of earth, instead of regarding the wisdom of the skies. I am afraid that in looking into our own hearts and studying them in

connection with the operations of the Holy Spirit, not one of us could dare to say, without exception, "O Lord, I have heard Your speech."

In the text before us we meet with a Prophet whose ears had been spiritually opened, and who therefore heard the still, small Voice of Jehovah, where others perceived neither sound nor utterance. There are times even with us when, being under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we hold near communion with our God; then are our hearts like wax to His seal, receiving the impression of the Divine Mind. Are you not conscious of having been in such a state? It must be so, dear Hearer, in a measure, with all the Lord's servants; but especially must it be often so with those of us who are called to bear His messages to the people. I have most solemnly sought to hear the speech of Jehovah in my own soul before I came into this pulpit, and pray that His Divine Power may enable me to convey that speech to you. I have been afraid this week, as I have heard the Voice of God in this land; trembling has taken hold upon me as Jehovah has spoken in thunderclaps, and made the whole land to echo with His terrible accents. I may be to some of you as an interpreter, and you who are spiritual men, you will discern and judge whether I have heard the speech of God or not. If you shall find it to be God's Voice to you, I hope you will be led to the farther carrying out of the language of the text in that much-needed prayer, "O Lord, revive Your work."

There are three things in the text—*an alarming voice, an appropriate prayer,* and *a potent argument*—"in wrath remember *mercy."*

I. Hear, with solemn awe, THE ALARMING VOICE. The speech of God demands your humblest attention. We need not enter into particulars of the heavy tidings which came to the ear of Habakkuk when he set upon the tower, and watched to see what the Lord would say to him. Our business, this morning, is to tell you, in all solemnity, what the Voice of God has been saying to us. In my lonely meditations I heard a Voice, as of one that spoke in the name of the Lord. I bowed my head to receive the message, and the Voice said, "Cry," and when I said, "What shall I cry?" the answer came to me as to Isaiah of old, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades: because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass." Then I thought I saw before me a great meadow reaching far and wide, and it was like a rainbow for its many colors, for the flowers of summer were in their beauty. In the midst of it I marked a mower of dark and cruel aspect, who with a scythe most sharp and glittering, was clearing mighty stretches of the field at each sweep, and laying the fair flowers in withering heaps. He advanced with huge strides of leagues at once, leaving desolation behind him, and I understood that the mower's name was Death.

As I looked I was afraid for my house, and my children, for my kinsfolk and acquaintance, and for myself also; for the mower drew nearer and nearer, and as he came onward a voice was heard as of a trumpet, "Prepare to meet your God." Moreover, as I mused on I heard a rumbling

in the bowels of the earth, as though the Destroyer were traversing the dark pathways which the miner has dug, and doing his fearful work among the stones of darkness which are at the roots of the mountains. I wondered with sore amazement, and behold there came up from the mouth of the pit a thundering cloud of vapor, of smoke and fire, and dust, and rushing whirlwind, which told to wailing women that they were widows and their children fatherless; and the Angel of Death again cried in my ears, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades: because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass."

I have come here this morning sorely afraid, and much bowed down because of the mortality of man, and the certainty of death. We shall soon be gone, every one of us, to his grave; if not by such an alarming catastrophe as that which has amazed and troubled us during this week, yet by the common processes of decay. You whom I now see before me are the meadows, and death is in your midst. You are the flowers, and I hear the terrible blast, which, alas, must wither even you. I see you, but there is no joy in my eyes, for the cheek of beauty shall pale, and the eyes of youth shall grow dim, and the sinews of the strong shall fail them, and the arms of the mighty shall be powerless in the tomb. As the autumn leaves are gone, so are our fathers; and as the floods hurry to the ocean, even so are we hastening away. An Irresistible torrent hurries us to our doom; a mighty wind from the Lord sweeps us forever onward. While we thus quietly consider it the great mystery is being enacted, a thousand graves are being dug, and a thousand corpses are being laid in new-made sepulchers. At this moment hundreds are wading into the cold, chill stream of Jordan; passing into the disembodied state to hear the Judgment of the Great King.

As I thought upon this matter, and desired to hear God's speech therein, I saw a precipice, whose frowning steep overhung a sea of fire. Leading up to its brink I saw a road exceedingly broad, a road which was crowded from side to side with a thronging multitude, who pressed and trod upon one another in their raging zeal to reach the summit of the crag. They went gaily on, merrily laughing, singing to sprightly music, many of them dancing, some of them pushing aside their fellows that they might reach sooner than was imperative upon them the end of which they knew so little. As I looked at that end which none of them could see, I saw a waterfall of souls falling in ceaseless, headlong stream into unutterably profound depths. As the crowd came on rank by rank to the edge of this precipice, they fell, they leaped over, or were dashed from the treacherous crag, and descended amid cries and shrieks surpassing all imagination into the Lake of Fire, where they were submerged with an everlasting baptism, overwhelmed with destruction from the Presence of the Lord. I thought I heard their groans and moans their shrieks and sighs as they first caught sight of the terrible abyss and would have shrunk back from it, but were quite unable, for the time to pause was

past. Even now I see before my eyes that terrific Niagara of souls descending by thousands every hour into the gulf unknown. This is the broad road of which we had heard so often, where multitudes delight to walk. "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are they who go in it." Sure and terrible is the doom of everyone who treads there. Oh that men would forsake it at once and forever! Alas! Alas! Are not the great mass of our fellow citizens beneath the scepter of our Queen, traveling on this broad road? Even if we could conceive that all who attend the places of worship were in the narrow way that leads to Eternal Life, if we could be charitable enough to believe that, yet look at the multitude of outsiders!

Look at this city, with far more than a million for whom the sound of the church-going bell is meaningless; who know not God, neither regard Him, to whom the name of Christ is but a word to curse or to ridicule—they are going, my Brothers and Sisters, men and women of the same country as yourselves, of the same race and tribe, speaking our own language—they are going downward to destruction! Among them your own children, perhaps your wives, your husbands, your sons, your daughters, your parents, going in that motley crew, onward, swiftly onward, towards their dreadful end. My God will cast them away; their end will be destruction; they will be driven from the Presence of the Lord forever. Let these two thoughts, my Brothers and Sisters, burn in your souls until all coldness and indifference are consumed. Men die, and their souls are lost. Men die and their bodies are laid in the grave, but their souls descend into Hell. Scarcely were the first death a thing to be mourned over, if it were not for the second. It might be superfluous to shed so much as a single tear for all the men who died, if we knew that they rested in the arms of Jesus, and were forever blessed; but this is the sting of death, its bitterness, its wormwood and its gall, that sinners are condemned by Justice, and driven by Vengeance from the presence of Mercy into the place where hope can never follow them. Christian Brothers and Sisters, hear this Voice of God and be afraid.

Over and above all this, there came upon me a horror of great darkness as I perceived something even more terrible than this. You will say to me, "How can it possibly be more terrible?" In certain aspects it seemed so to me. Hear it and judge. What if it is true that within the last 12 months the Church of the Living God has scarcely made the slightest approach to an advance? What if this is true as respects a far longer period? Let the first sad fact rise before us with its proof. For the last 12 months no apparent increase has been made to the number of professed disciples of the Lord Jesus. Do you ask me for the proofs? I can prove it alas too surely. Our own body, the Baptist denomination, is upon the whole, and all things considered, in as sound and healthy a state as any Christian community now existing; I am persuaded that in some respects it is more sound and more healthy; but do you know what will have been the increase during the 12 months of the entire denomination in

England, Scotland, and Ireland, a far as we can ascertain it? Well, with the exception of London and the county of Glamorgan, in Wales, there will be no increase worthy of the name. In many parts of Wales, where we are strongest, there will be a positive decrease; and I think, in 15 counties of England, we shall have lost numbers instead of making any advance, and when the whole are put together, the good with the bad, and this London of ours, wherein God has greatly blessed us of late, is counted with the rest, our entire increase for all the Churches with all their ministers will not make up 4,000 souls. It is true that our statistics are not very accurate, but if they were more accurate I believe the result would be more unfavorable. This is the more fearful to me to contemplate, because the increase of the denomination, which by God's Grace we might naturally look for merely from the increase of population, should have been very much more than this.

If other Christian Churches have not increased more, and I am persuaded that most of them have increased less, far less than we have, then I am correct in saying that positively the Church of God in Great Britain and Ireland, instead of making any real advance, has, in proportion to the increase of population, absolutely gone backwards, and I believe it would be accurate and truthful, and could be borne out by statistics, that if at this day there were taken a census of the number of persons who commune at the Lord's Table, it would be found to be smaller instead of larger than the number at the corresponding period of last year. As for abroad, what have our missions done? Beloved, if there were but one soul we ought to rejoice, but the result of missions has been of late so terribly little as to call for great searching of heart. Is it not a fact that there are missionaries of 10 years' standing who have never had a convert? Is it not also a sad fact that the number of members in all our native Churches is probably less now than it was 12 months ago? Where is the nation that has been born in a day in this year 1866? Where are the kings who have bowed down before King Jesus? Where are the nations that have called Him "Blessed"? Is there so much as one little tribe, however insignificant, that has acknowledged Christ during the past year? Not one, not one! There has been no visible advance. The armies of the Living God have rather suffered a repulse than gained a victory, and instead of the morning coming and the light arising, and the sun advancing to a noonday height, it seems as though at the best he stood still, if the light did not even go backwards. Surely there is a voice from God here, and as I hear it I am afraid.

Meanwhile, what kind of an age has this been in which we have lived? Is it so impassive and thoughtless that progress is impossible? Are we living in one of those dark ages in which mind is rocked to sleep and the soul is stupefied? Has this last year been one in which the sleepiness of the human intellect has prevented our presenting the Truth of God to the sons of men? I think not. I believe, Brothers and Sisters, that this year has been one of the most wakeful in the annals of human history. At this

moment London is like the city of which the Prophet said, "You are full of noise" (Isa 22:2 NKJV).There are political noises in which the Christian minister finds no theme for sorrow, for when men's minds are but awake for anything there is then an opportunity for the propagation of the Truth of God. Truth dreads nothing so much as a sleepy audience! Give her but minds on the wing, and she will train them to the skies. This has been a year in which both upon politics and religion the human mind has been active, and had the Christian Churches been filled with the Spirit, and therefore zealous and faithful, I cannot comprehend that she would at the close of the year have had to cry, "Who has believed our report?" We have indulged the fancy that we have had a General Revival, and that our churches are in a healthy state, but is it so? Let our non-success answer the question.

In the meantime, while the Truth of God slumbers, the legions of evil spirits cease not their mischievous endeavors. How swiftly have the locusts of priest-craft ascended from the smoke of the bottomless pit of Hell and covered the land! While we are compelled to fear that evangelical Truth has made no advance, we cannot say this of ritualism, for its progress has been perfectly astounding! Though a Prophet should have told us that this Anglican Popery would have made so great an advance in so short a time, we would have said, "Impossible! England is soundly Protestant! She will never bear to have incense smoking under her nose, and to see the millinery of the Church of Rome flaunted before her face!" But she *has* borne it, and she likes it well. Despite much that has been said concerning Puseyism being non-English, we are inclined to question the statement. Where are the greatest crowds in the Establishment? Are they not at the feet of these priests of Baal? Do not rank and fashion gather most readily in those places where their senses are delighted while their souls are deluded? Yes, through the means of our Popish establishment there has been an onward rush of error which is perfectly appalling! Watchman, when they ask you, "What of the night?" can you say, "the morning comes"?

You who love the Savior, will you open your ears to catch the meaning of all these things? Men dying, men perishing, the Church slumbering, and error covering the land—does not God say something in all this? Do you not hear out of this thick darkness the Voice saying, "O My people, I have somewhat against you"? Did I not hear the Lord saying, "They shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands?" I saw the Church of God folding her hands, given to slumber, saying, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," and all the while she was allowing multitudes to perish for lack of knowledge, leaving the banner of Truth to be moth-eaten, or to be trailed in the mire, and permitting the friends of error to ride roughshod over all the land. As I saw her thus I said within my heart, "Surely the Lord will chasten such a people as this," and I feared that He would send judgments upon His Church, and perhaps take away her candlestick out of the place, and

give the Light unto another people that might serve Him more faithfully! Then I felt as Habakkuk did, I heard the Voice of the Lord, and I was afraid. I was afraid for my fellow men, thinking of the multitudes of them who had already gone beyond recall to the land of darkness and to the regions of doom, and for the millions hastening to the same end. I was afraid for the Christian Church, lest it should have a name to live and be dead, lest the Lord should give up the Church in Britain as He did His Church in Shiloh, of which He said, "Go you now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel."

I feared lest He might do for the Church in Britain as He has to the church in Rome—given it over to become an antichrist, and an abomination before the eyes of God and men. I was afraid with exceedingly great fear for my fellow ministers, for I feared that all this people could not have perished without their being guilty of some of their blood! How could all this ignorance have remained in this land if the preachers had been faithful? I fear that the blood of souls will be required at the hands of many a minister. What do I see? A gathering of ministers. And what is this I see upon their garments? I see blood on them. I see blood sprinkled on gray heads, and alas, I see blood upon the brows of young men who have but lately entered into the work—blood upon them all. Here do I much fear for myself, lest I also, addressing this multitude so constantly, should have much blood upon my clothes because of my many responsibilities! O God! It is enough to make us afraid. Why look, my Brothers; when God's servants were truly active, as the first 12 were, did the cause stand still? Did they win here and there a soul, and have now and then a conversion? Did the cause of Christ go back like an army put to the rout? On the contrary, did they not as soon as ever they received the Truth of God, use it like a fire-brand to set the nations on a blaze?

They met with persecutions which do not stand in our way; they were assaulted by threats of death which we have not to brave, and yet nothing could stand against their indomitable zeal, the Omnipotence of the Holy Spirit rested on them, and they went on conquering and to conquer! And what are we? Oh we are cold and dead where they were full of fire and life. We are the degenerate sons of glorious fathers. Do you think the Church could have had it said that she remained a year without increase if there were not blame somewhere? You may remind me of Divine Sovereignty, if you will, but I remember that Divine Sovereignty always acts with wisdom and with love, and that the Lord has not said to us, "Labor in vain." If we had labored, and if all the Christian Church had labored as they should have labored, I believe the promise would have been proven, "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

II. When one is thus bowed down with the Voice of God, the most natural prompting of the regenerate soul is to pray; so we turn to the second part of the text which has in it AN APPROPRIATE PRAYER. I wish

I had power this morning to make you feel the weight of what I have already brought before you. I know I have not put it in such language as I should have chosen, but it seems to me to be perfectly dreadful that there should be this constant dying, this constant ruin, this constant spread of error, and no progress in the Church. I am sure when I heard it, if a messenger had told me that I was a beggar, that I had lost everything on earth, I would have been more pleased with such an announcement than to know that God's Church had not increased in the space of 12 months. It seems to me to be a thing to mourn over, a thing to make us go to God with a humble heart, and to feel as if one had been sorely chastened by the Most High. For the Lord knows some of us have worked with all our might, and we hope it is not pride when we say the blame does not rest with us, and yet the question must go to us all. We must deal faithfully with ourselves and not be flattered. We would honestly inquire, How much of this lies at my door? How much of this burden of God ought I to bear today? Certainly enough to lead us to such prayer as that before us.

Habakkuk, being bowed down, first turns himself to God. His first word is, "O Lord." To the Most High we must carry both our own and our Church's troubles. Habakkuk turns not to another Prophet to ask of him, "My Brother, what shall we do?" He turns to the Master, "O Lord, what will *You* do?" It will be well for us to confer with one another as to the causes of defeat and the means for securing success, but all conference with flesh and blood is idle unless it is preceded by solemn conferences with God. For God's Church, God is needed. For God's work, God's own arm must be made bare. Is it not delightful to notice how heavy trials drive us to God when we might not have gone to Him otherwise? The little child, when walking abroad, runs before his father, but if he meets some strange man of whom he is afraid, he runs back and takes his father's hand directly; so should it be with us. If God had prospered all our Churches, and everything had gone on as we had desired, we might, perhaps, have grown self-confident, and have said, "O Lord, You have given us power in ourselves," but now that we see the contrary, let us run back to closer fellowship and nearer communion with our God than ever, and taking hold upon the arm of His strength, let us stir Him up by our continued and fervent prayers.

Notice next that the prayer of Habakkuk is about *God's* Church. He knew that there were dark days coming over Palestine, but he does not pray about that land in particular. "O Lord," he said, "revive *Your* work." Certain would-be prophets tell us that many wonders will occur in 1866 and 1867, though I notice a propensity to postpone the whole business to *1877.* Is this postponement intended that there may be 10 years longer in which to sell their books? But whatever is to come, whether the Turkish empire is to be destroyed, or Louis Napoleon is to annex Germany, whether Rome is to be swallowed up by an earthquake, does not seem to me to matter as much as the turn of a button. The great

thing to a Christian is not the fate of earthly empires, but the state of the *heavenly* Kingdom. As to what is to become of this principality or that empire, what have you and I to do with these things? We are the servants of a spiritual King whose Kingdom is not of this world. Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth, and break each other as they will; our business is with King Jesus and His throne. It is delightful to see the Prophet rising beyond the narrow range of the Jew, getting out of nationalities and praying, "O Lord, revive Your work." That is the one ship we care for in the storm, that one vessel in which Jesus Christ is riding at the helm, the Captain of Salvation, and the Lord High Admiral of the seas. Let the nations mix in dire confusion as they will, God rules over all, and brings out His Church in triumph from all the strife of earth. The one anxiety of our souls should be the blood-stained banner of the Cross; will *it* wave high? Will King Jesus get to Himself the crown, for we have neither will nor wish beyond that.

So, Christian, if you have heard God's Voice in the great judgments that are abroad, let those judgments lead you to pray, "Lord, remember Your Church—*Your* Church—Your Church in England, Your Church in America, Your Church in France, Your Church in Germany, Your Church anywhere, Your Church everywhere. O God, look upon Your elect ones; let the separate ones, scattered through all nations, receive of Your benediction; as for all else, in Providence, we leave it to Your will, for You know what is best."

Observe next that the Prophet uses a word which is singularly discriminative: "O Lord, revive *Your* work." He does not say, "Lord, prosper *my* work." How often do I go to God in concern about the work that is going on in this Tabernacle! I am thankful for all the blessing we have seen, and I grow increasingly anxious lest the Lord should withdraw His hand; but when one looks abroad upon the world, and upon all the Lord's people in different denominations, one cannot pray, "Lord, prosper *my* work." At least, one *can* pray that, but then cover that over with another—"O Lord, revive YOUR work." For what about my work? Well, as far as it is mine it is very faulty. And what about the work of the Baptists? Well, there is doubtless much that is wrong about it. And what about the work of the Methodists, and the work of the Congregationalists, and so on? May God prosper them according as they walk in His Truth, but the way to come to the core of our prayer is to cry, "O Lord, revive *Your* work; whatever is of You, whatever is Your Truth, whatever is Your Spirit's work in the hearts of men, whatever is genuine conversion and vital godliness—Lord, revive it!" Cannot you, dear Friends, in the presence of death which we have been speaking of, and in the presence of judgment, and in the presence of the fact that the Christian Church has not been increased these 12 months, shake off all the bitterness of everything that has to do with self, or with denomination, and now pray, "Lord, revive *Your* work, and if Your work happens to be more in one branch of the Church than in another, Lord,

give that the most reviving. Give us all the blessing, but let Your own Purposes be accomplished, and Your own Glory come of it and we shall be well content, though we should be forgotten and unknown. 'O Lord, revive Your work.'"

Note that the particular blessing he asks for is a *revival* of God's work, by which we mean, in our time, that there should be a revival of the old Gospel preaching. We must have it back. It comes to this—our ministers must return to the same Gospel which John Bunyan and George Whitefield preached. We cannot get on with philosophical gospels; we must bring together all these new geological gospels and neological gospels, and semi-Pelagian gospels, and do with them as the people of Ephesus did with the books—we must burn them, and let Paul preach again to us. We can do without modern learning, but we cannot do without the ancient Gospel. We can do without oratory and eloquence, but we cannot do without Christ Crucified. Lord, revive Your work by giving us the old-fashioned Gospel back again in our pulpits. It is to be lamented that there are so many who are considered not to be bad preachers who scarcely ever mention Christ's name, and are very loose concerning Atonement by His precious blood. You will hear people say they have gone to such-and-such a Chapel, and whatever the sermon might have been about it certainly was not about the Gospel. Oh may that cease to be the case! May our pulpits ring with the name of Jesus; may Christ be lifted up, and His precious blood be the daily theme of the ministry! Oh that thousands might be brought to put their trust in the Lamb slain, and to find salvation by faith in Him whom God has appointed to be the Savior of men!

This, however, would not bring back a revival unless there came with it a revival of the Gospel Spirit. If you read the story of the Reformation, or the later story of the new Reformation under Whitefield and Wesley, you are struck with the singular Spirit that went with the preachers. The world said they were mad; the caricaturists drew them as being fanatical beyond all endurance; but there it was, their zeal was their power. Of course the world scoffed at that of which it was afraid. The world fears enthusiasm, the sacred enthusiasm which love to Christ kindles, the enthusiasm which is kindled by the thought of the ruin of men and by the desire to pluck the firebrands from the flame, the enthusiasm which believes in the Holy Spirit, which believes that God is still present with His Church to do wonders; this is what the world dreads, and what the Church needs. Pray for it, pray to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire! O Lord, send forth Your unconquerable Spirit! O God, revive Your work!

You perceive that the Prophet desires this gift at once. He does not say, *"at the end* of the years," but *"in the midst* of the years." His prayer is for a present and immediate revival of genuine religion. Let it be ours, not from the teeth outward but from the heart outward to pray for revival; let us long for it with heart and soul and strength, and God will give it to us.

Once more note that the prayer of Habakkuk is a very intelligent one, for he indicates the means by which he expects to have it fulfilled; in the midst of the years *make known.* It is by making known the Gospel that men are saved, not by mere thumping of the pulpit and stamping of the feet, but by telling out something which the understanding may grasp and the memory may retain. To publish the Doctrine of a reconciled God, to tell men that the Lord has laid Hell upon Jesus by punishing Him instead of us; to proclaim that there is life in a look at the Crucified One, to tell them that the Holy Spirit creates men new creatures in Christ Jesus, to give a full and comprehensive view of the Doctrines of Grace; these are some of the surest ways, under God, of promoting a revival of religion.

I cannot talk to you but I think I could pray to God, and I hope many of you will do so today. O God, send us a revival; this will purge the blood of souls from our garments—nothing else will. This will roll back the tides of error—nothing else can! This will give to the Christian Church triumph of an unusual kind; this will cover the earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the deep, but nothing else can or will. Gracious God, revive Your work.

III. And now we close with A POTENT ARGUMENT. He uses the argument of mercy—"in wrath remember mercy." If God were to say to the Churches in England, "I will have nothing to do with you; you have been so idle, so worldly, so purse-proud, so prayerless, so quarrelsome, so inconsistent, that I will never bless you again," the Churches of God in England might remain as astounding monuments of the Justice of God towards the people who forsake His ways. Sorrowfully, not wishing to be an accuser of the Brethren, it does seem to me that considering the responsibilities which were laid upon us, and the means which God has given us, the Church generally, (there are blessed exceptions!), has done so little for Christ that if "Ichabod" were written right across its brow, and it were banished from God's House, it would have its just deserts. We cannot therefore appeal to merit, it must be mercy. O God, have mercy upon Your poor Church, and visit her, and revive her. She has but a little strength; she has desired to keep Your Word, oh, refresh her; restore to her Your Power, and give her yet to be great in this land.

Mercy is also needed for the land itself. This is a wicked nation, this England; its wickedness belongs not to one class only, but to all classes. Sin runs down our streets; we have a fringe of elegant morality, but behind it we have a mass of rottenness. There is not only the immorality of the streets at night, but look at the dishonesty of business men in high places. Cheating and thieving upon the grandest scale are winked at. Little thieves are punished, and great thieves are untouched. This is a wicked city, this city of London, and the land is full of drunkenness, and the land is full of fornication, and the land is full of theft, and the land is full of all manner of Popish idolatry! I am not the proper prophet to take up this burden, and to utter a wailing; my temperament is not that of

Jeremiah, and therefore am I not well-called to such a mission; but I may at least, with Habakkuk, having heard the Lord's speech concerning it, be afraid and exhort you to pray for this land, and be asking that God would revive His work in order that this drunkenness may be given up, that this dishonesty may be purged out, that this great social evil may be cut out from the body politic, as a deadly cancer is cut out by the surgeon's knife. O God, for mercy's sake, cast not off this island of the seas, give her not up to internal distraction, leave her not in darkness and blackness forever, but "revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."

While I have been addressing Christians, my objective has been to bless the ungodly too, and I do trust that some here who are not converted will inquire, "What, then, is God's Voice to me?" May you be led to seek salvation, and remember you shall find it, for whoever trusts Christ shall be saved. If there is a man, woman, or child among you who will now humble himself under the hand of God, and look to the Crucified Savior, you shall not perish, neither shall the Wrath of God abide upon you, but you shall be found of Him in peace in the day of His appearing. God accept this humble weak testimony for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HABAKKUK 3.

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"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."
John 10:28.

SOME will say that this is a mixed congregation, and that such a Doctrine as this should not be advanced in the presence of ungodly men and women. This shows how little such objectors read their Bible, for this very text was spoken by the Savior, not to His loving disciples, but to His enemies. Read the 31st verse of the Chapter, and you will see the temper of the congregation to whom Jesus Christ preached upon this subject—"Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him." So it was an indignant multitude of bigots who had this hurled into their faces by the Savior, that although *they* might reject Him, and because of their willful obstinacy might miss the blessings of Divine Grace, yet those blessings were rich and rare. He would have them to know that what they lost was inexpressibly precious, and that His message was not to be despised without great damage to their souls. Thus, if there is a mixed multitude here—and I fear the allegation is true, that there are many here who cannot comprehend the preciousness of the things of God—yet, for the same reason which prompted the Savior to preach this Doctrine to the wicked in His day, we will do the same now, that they may know what it is they lose by losing Christ, what those comfortable things are which they despise, and what are the inestimable treasures which those must miss who seek after the treasures of this world, and let their God, their Savior go.

We have no time to loiter, and let us therefore, as the bee sucks honey from the flower, seek after the sweet essence of the text, "I give unto them eternal life." The context tells us that the pronoun "them" refers to Christ's sheep, to certain persons whom He had chosen to be His sheep, and whom He had also called to be such. Lest we should be in the dark as to whom they are, our Savior has kindly put us in possession of the marks by which His sheep may be discovered. We cannot read the secret roll of Election, nor can we search the heart, but we can mark the outward conduct of men, and the verse before the text tells us by what signs we are to know God's people—"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." The marks are the hearing of Christ, and then the following of Christ, first, by faith in Him, and then by an active obedience to His precepts. "Faith which works by love" is the mark of Christ's sheep, and it is of true Believers that He speaks when He says, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Would to God that all of us wore the uniform of the Elect, namely, active, sanctifying faith! Oh that we all

listened to the Great Shepherd's voice, that we all received the Truths of God which He delivers, and then resolved by His Grace to follow Him wherever He goes, as the sheep follow the shepherd.

Having thus explained to whom the text belongs, we will now handle it in a threefold manner. The text implies, first, *somewhat concerning the past of these people;* the text plainly states, in the second place, *a great deal about the present state of these people;* and, thirdly, the text not obscurely hints at *something about their future.*

I. In the first place, the studious reader will observe that the text implies SOMEWHAT CONCERNING THE PAST HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

It is said, "I give unto them eternal life." There is an implication, therefore, *that they had lost Eternal Life.* Every one of God's people fell in Adam, and all have fallen also by actual sin; consequently we came under condemnation, and Christ Jesus has done for us what Her Majesty the Queen has sometimes done for a condemned criminal—He has bought us a free pardon. He has given us life. When our own desert was eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord, Jesus Christ stepped in, and He said, "You are forgiven; the sentence shall not take place upon you; your offense is blotted out; you are clear." No, I think the text implies that there was something more than condemnation, there was execution. We were not only condemned to die, we were already spiritually dead. Jesus did not merely spare the life which ought to have been taken, and in that sense gave it to us, but He imparted to us a life which we had not before enjoyed. It is implied in the text that we were spiritually dead; no, we are not left here to our own surmising, nor even to our own experience, for the Apostle Paul has said, "You has He quickened who were *dead* in trespasses and sins." What, Paul, dead? Are you not mistaken? Perhaps we were only a little sick? No, we are ready to admit, O Apostle, that we were sick and near to death, but surely we had a little vital energy, a little power to assist ourselves! "No," says the Apostle, "you were dead, dead in trespasses and sins." The work of salvation is tantamount, not only to the healing of the sick, but to the actual resurrection of a dead man from his grave. All the saints who are now alive unto God were once as dead as others, quite as corrupt and offensive as others, and as much an ill savor in the nostrils of Divine Justice by reason of their sins as even the most corrupt of their fellows. We had altogether gone out of the way; we had altogether become abominable, for "there is none that does good, no not one." When we were all shut up under sin then Jesus Christ came into the region of death, and brought life and Immortality to us. Life was forfeited by all the saints; spiritual life they had none; Jesus the Quickener has made them alive unto God.

Is it not also very clearly implied that, as far from having any life, *these people could not otherwise have obtained life except by its being given to them?* It is a rule well known to all Biblical students, that you never meet in God's Word with an unnecessary miracle, that a miracle is never worked where the ordinary course of Nature would suffice. Now,

my Brothers and Sisters, the greatest of all miracles is the salvation of a soul. If that soul could save itself God would not save it, but would let it do what it could do; and if the spiritually dead could quicken themselves, rest assured, from the analogy of all the Divine Transactions, that Jesus Christ would not have come to give them life. I believe that it would be utterly impossible for any one of us to enter Heaven, let us do what we might, unless Jesus Christ had come from Heaven to show us the way, to remove the bolts and bars for us, and to enable us to tread in the path which leads to Glory and Immortality. Lost! Lost! Lost! The race of man was utterly lost, not partly lost, not thrown into a condition in which it might be ruined unless it worked hard to save itself; but so lost that but for the interposition of a Divine Arm, but for the appearance of God in human flesh, but for the stupendous transaction upon Calvary, and the work of God the Holy Spirit in the heart, not one dead soul ever could come to life! Eternal Life would not be the peculiar work of the Lord Jesus if man had a finger in it, but man's power is excluded and Divine Grace reigns.

It is clearly to be seen in the text, by a little thought, *that Eternal Life was not the merit of any one of God's people, for it is said that it is given to us.* Now, a gift is the very opposite of payment. What a man receives as a gift he certainly does not deserve. If it is given to us, then it is no more a debt, but if it is a debt then it can no more be a gift. None of us merits Eternal Life, or ever can merit it. Mere mortal life is a gift of Divine Mercy, we do not deserve it; and as for the Eternal Life spoken of in the text, it is a gift too high for the fingers of human merit to hope to reach it; if a man should work ever so hard after it, yet upon the footing of the Law it would be impossible for him to obtain it. Man merits nothing but death, and life must be the free gift of God. "The wages of sin is death," that is to say it is earned and procured as matter of debt; "but the gift of God," the Free-Grace gift of God, "is Eternal Life." Now, this is a very humiliating Doctrine, I know, but it is true, and I want you all to feel it. Children of God, I know you do. You see the hole of the pit from where *you* were drawn. Do you see it? Or have you grown proud of late? Those fine feelings and prayers of yours—have you stuck them like feathers in your cap? I pray you remember what you were! *You*, proud! Do not forget the dunghill where you once grew! Remember the filth out of which God took you, and instead of being scarlet with the garments of pride, your cheeks may well be scarlet with a blush! Oh, may God forbid, once and for all, that we should glory, for what have we to glory in? What have we that we have not received?

It is clear, too, from the text, that *those who are now righteous would have perished but for Christ.* Christ says, "they shall never perish." Promises are never given as superfluities. There is a necessity, therefore, for this Promise. There was a danger, a solemn danger, that every one of those who are now saved would have perished eternally. Sin made them heirs of wrath even as others, so Scripture tells us; and Justice must have overwhelmed them with the rest if Distinguishing Grace had not prevented! Even now it is solemnly true, that there is no reason why a

truly righteous soul should not perish, except that Christ prevents it. You are alive, but you would not be spiritually alive an hour unless the Holy Spirit continued to pour His vital energy into your soul. You shall be preserved, but, mark you, it is stated as a Promise, and therefore it is not at all a matter of natural necessity. Apart from Divine Grace you are in fearful danger of apostasy, and probably you have fears about it even now; like the Apostle who feared lest after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway; a very proper fear, a fear which will often come upon sincere souls who feel a holy jealousy of themselves. But we need have no fear when we come to the Promise of God, for if we are really in Christ we have a guarantee of security, since Christ's own Words are, "They shall never perish." The Promise was certainly given because it was needed. There is a danger of perishing; there are ten thousand risks of perishing; only Omnipotence itself keeps off the fiery darts of Satan; the blessed Physician gives the antidote, or the poison would soon destroy us; He who swears to bring us safely home protects us from a thousand foes who otherwise would work our ill. "They shall never perish."

It is also implied, *that naturally the people of God have ten thousand enemies who would pluck them out of Christ's hand.* They were once in the hand of the enemy; they were once willing bond-slaves of Satan. All this they know, and all this they are willing to acknowledge. I would to God that some here would feel the truth of that which I have been saying. You self-righteous ones will say, "I am all right; I do my best, I go to a place of worship." Now, Soul, that is right enough in itself, but if you boast of it, it is an evidence that you know neither God nor yourself! When I have heard of some who have boasted that they felt no inbred sin, I have wished that they would read the story of the Pharisee and the Publican. At the Fulton Street Prayer Meeting, a Brother asked for the prayers of Believers because he felt so much the corruption of his own heart, the temptations of Satan, and especially the natural vileness of his own nature. A Brother stood up on the opposite side of the hall, and said he thanked God that was not his experience; he did not feel any corruption, and his heart was not depraved. The other one made no reply, but a friend present read these words: "Two men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone who exalts himself shall be abased; and he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

A sense of sin is a blessed sign either of pardon received, or of pardon to come. He who says he has no sin makes God a liar, and the Truth is not in him. He who will not confess his sin shall never be absolved; but he who, with a broken and a trembling heart, goes to the foot of the

Cross shall find forgiveness there. This much, then, upon the past estate of the heirs of Heaven.

II. And now, to plunge at once into the subject. THE TEXT SHEDS A FLOOD OF LIGHT UPON THE PRESENT STATE OF EVERY BELIEVER.

1. We shall have to give you hints rather than a long exposition, so kindly take the first sentence, which speaks of *a gift received.* "I give unto them Eternal Life." This gift is, first of all, *life*. You will make strange confusion of God's Word if you confuse life with existence, for they are very different things. All men will exist forever, but many will dwell in everlasting death; they will know nothing whatever of life. Life is a distinct thing altogether from existence, and implies in God's Word something of activity and of happiness. In the text before us it includes many things. Note the difference between the stone and the plant. The plant has vegetable life. You know the difference between the animal and the plant. While the plant has vegetable life, yet it is altogether dead in the sense in which we speak of living creatures. It has not the sensations which belong to animal life. Then, again, if we turn to another and higher grade, namely, mental life, an animal is dead as far as that is concerned. It cannot enter at all into the mysterious calculations of the mathematician, nor revel in the sublime glories of poetry. The animal has nothing to do with the life of the intellectual mind; as to mental life it is dead. Now, there is a grade of life which is higher than the mental life—a higher life quite unknown to the philosopher, not put down in Plato, nor spoken of by Aristotle, but understood by the very least of the children of God. It is a phase of life called, "spiritual life," a new form of life altogether, which does not belong to man naturally, but is given to him by Jesus Christ. The first man, Adam, was made a living soul and all his descendants are made like he. The Second Adam is made a quickening spirit, and until we are made like the Second Adam we know nothing of spiritual life.

This body of ours is by nature adapted for a soulish life. The Apostle tells us, in that wonderful Chapter in Corinthians, that the body is sown—what? "A natural body." The Greek is, "A *soulish* body"—"but it is raised"—what? "A spiritual body." There is a soulish body, and there is a spiritual body. There is a body adapted to the lower life which belongs to all men, a mere mental existence; and there is to be a body which will belong to all those who have received spiritual life, who shall dwell in that body as the house of their perfected spirit in Heaven. The life which Jesus Christ gives His people is spiritual life, therefore it is *mysterious*. "You hear the sound thereof but you cannot tell from where it comes, nor where it goes; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." You who have mental life cannot explain to the horse or the dog what it is, neither can we who have spiritual life explain to those who have it not what it is. You can tell them what it does and what its effects are, but what the "spark of heavenly flame" may be you yourselves, you do not know, though you are conscious that it is there.

It is spiritual life which Jesus Christ gives His people, but it is more; it is *Divine Life.* This life is like the Life of God, and therefore it is *elevating*.

"We are made," says the Apostle, "partakers of the Divine Nature." "Begotten again by God the Father, not," says the Apostle, "with corruptible seed, but with incorruptible." We do not become *Divine*, but we receive a Nature which enables us to sympathize with Deity, to delight in the topics which engage the Eternal Mind, and to live upon the same principles as the Most Holy God. We love, for God is Love. We begin to be holy, for God is thrice Holy. We desire perfection, for He is Perfect. We delight in doing good, for God is Good. We get into a new atmosphere. We pass out of the old range of the mere mental faculties; our spiritual faculties make us akin to God. "Let Us," said He, "make man in Our own image, after Our own likeness." That image Adam lost; that image Christ restores, and gives to us that life which Adam lost in the day when he sinned, when God said to him, "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." In that sense he *did* die; the sentence was *not* postponed; he died spiritually as soon as he touched the fruit; and this long-lost life Jesus Christ restores to every soul who believes in Him.

This life, you will gather from my remarks, is *heavenly life*. It is the same life that expands and develops itself in Heaven. The Christian does not die. What does the Savior say? "He who believes in Me shall never die." Does not the mental life die? Yes. Does not the mere bodily life die? Yes, but not the spiritual life. It is the same life here which it will be there, only now it is undeveloped and corruption impedes its action. Brothers and Sisters, nothing of us shall go to Heaven as flesh and blood, but only as it is subdued, elevated, changed, and perfected by the influence of the spirit-life. Know you not that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption." Then what is the "I," the "myself" that shall enter Heaven? Why, if you are in Christ a new creature, then that new creature and nothing but that new creature, the very life which you have lived here in the Tabernacle, the very life that has budded and blossomed in the garden of communion with God, that life which has led you to visit the sick, and clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, that life which has made tears of repentance stream down your cheeks, that life which has caused you to believe in Jesus—this is the life which will go to Heaven; and if you have not this, then you do not possess the life of Heaven, and dead souls cannot enter there. Only living men can enter into the land of the living. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, so also shall we bear the image of the heavenly." Even now the heavenly life heaves and throbs within us.

I think it may also be inferred from all this that the life which Christ gives His people is an *energetic life*. If the spiritual life is poured into a man it raises him above his former state, and lifts him out of the range of merely carnal comprehension. He himself is discerned of no man. "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." You cannot expect the world to understand this new life. It is a hidden thing. It will be a mystery to yourselves, a wonder to your own hearts. But oh, how active it will be! It will fight with your sins, and will not be satisfied until it has slain them. If you tell me you never have a conflict within, I tell you I

cannot understand how you can have the Divine Life, for it is sure to come into conflict at once with the old nature, and there will be perpetual strife. The man becomes a new man at home; his wife and family observe it; he is a different man in business; he is a changed man altogether, whether you view him in connection with his fellow men or with his God. He is a new creature. He feels that the new and wondrous life which has been planted in him has made him of a different race from the common herd, and he walks among the sons of men feeling that he is an alien and a stranger. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is."

I wish there were more time to describe the inward life, but this must suffice to indicate the blessing which Jesus gives to the Believer by the work of the Holy Spirit.

There is a word in the text, which qualifies it: "I give unto them *Eternal* Life." "Eternal" means "without end." If Christ puts the Life of God into a man, that Life cannot be taken away. It cannot die, that were impossible. When I have heard one say that you may be a child of God today but that next week may find you a child of the devil, I have supposed that the word "eternal," according to him, could only have meant five or six days; but according to the dictionary I use, according to the mind of the Spirit, "eternal" means "without end." If, then, a man says, "I had spiritual life once, but I do not possess it now," it is clear that either he is altogether mistaken or he never had it at all. If Jesus had said, "I give unto them life which shall last for seven years, but which may perhaps be quenched and put out under temptation," I could understand a man saying that he had fallen from Grace; but if it is "Eternal Life," then it must be "eternal," there is no end to it, it must go on. The mere existence of the soul, we believe, will be never-ending, but it will be no gift to the ungodly that it will be so. It is not for Christ to give us mere Immortality of existence, for that will be a fearful curse to some men. Lost souls would be glad enough if they could be rid of their Immortal existence, but Christ gives an eternal, a holy life, a happy *life*, which is infinitely more than existence. Existence may be a curse, but life is a blessing. This life begins here: "I give unto them." Not, "I shall give," but, "I give." Not, "I will give it to them when they die," but, "I give it to them here, I give unto them Eternal Life." Now, my Hearer, you have either got Eternal Life tonight, or you are still in death. If you have not received it you are "dead in trespasses and sins," and your doom will be a terrible one; but if God has given you Eternal Life, fear not the surrounding hosts of Hell nor the temptations of the world, for the Eternal God is your Refuge, and underneath you are the everlasting arms.

This life *is given as a free gift* to every one of the Lord's people, and is bestowed by the Lord and by none else.

2. Let us turn now to the second part of the blessing. Here is *preservation secured.* "They shall never perish." Certain gentlemen who cannot endure the Doctrine of Final Perseverance manage to slip away from the next sentence, "Neither shall any pluck them out of My hand,"

and suggest, "but they may get out themselves." No, no, no, because the text says, "They shall never perish." Our present sentence, which we have now in hand, puts aside all suppositions of every kind about the destruction of one of Christ's sheep. "They shall never perish." Take each word. *"They* shall never perish." Some of their notions may, some of their comforts may, some of their experiences may, but THEY never shall. That which is the essence of the man, his true soul, his inward renewed nature, shall never be destroyed. See, then, Christian, you may be deprived of a thousand things without any violation of the Promise. The Promise is not that the ship shall not go to the bottom, but that the passengers shall get to the shore. The Promise is not that the house shall not be burned; the Promise is that you who are in the house shall escape. *"They* shall never perish."

Take another word: "They shall never *perish."* They shall go very near it, perhaps. They shall lose their joys and their comforts, but "they shall never *perish."* The life in them shall never be starved out, nor beaten out, nor driven out. If you once get leaven into a piece of bread you cannot get it out; you may boil it, you may fry it, you may bake it, you may do what you like with it, but the leaven is in it, and you cannot get it out. Get the soul saturated with the Grace of God, and you can never eradicate it. The man himself shall never perish. He may think he shall, the devil may tell him he shall, his comforts may be withdrawn, he may go to his deathbed full of doubts and fears about himself, but he shall never *perish.* Now this is either true or it is not. You who think it is not true tell the Lord so; but I believe that it is a most sure and Infallible fact, for Jehovah says it. I do not know how it is that they do not perish, it is a wondrous thing; but then it is all a marvel throughout from first to last. Now take the word *"never."* We have shown how long the preservation endures—"They shall *never* perish." "Well, but if they should live to be very old, and should then fall into sin?" "They shall *never* perish." Oh, but perhaps they may be assaulted in quarters where they least expect it, or they may be overcome by temptation." "They shall *never* perish." "Well, but a man may be a child of God and yet go to Hell." How so, if he can *never* perish? That "never" includes time and eternity, it includes living and dying, it includes the mountain and the valley, the tempest and the calm. "They shall *never* perish."—

"In every state secure,
Kept by the Eternal Hand."

Beneath the wings of the Almighty God night with its pestilence cannot smite them, and day with its cares cannot destroy them; youth with its passions shall be safely passed; middle age with all its whirl of business shall be navigated in safety; old age with its infirmities shall become the land of Beulah; death's gloomy vale shall be lit up with the coming splendor; the actual moment of departure, the last and solemn article shall be the passing over of a river dry-shod. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you, says the Lord." "They shall *never* perish."

There is a way of explaining away everything, I suppose, but I really do not know how the opponents of the Perseverance of God's Saints will get over this text. They may do with it as they will, but I shall still believe what I find here, that I shall never perish if I am one of Christ's people. If I perish, then Christ will not have kept His Promise; but I know He must abide faithful to His Word. "He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should relent." Every soul that rests on the Atoning Sacrifice is safe, and safe forever—"they shall *never* perish."

3. Then comes the third sentence, in which we have *a position guaranteed—"in Christ's hand."* We have not time to expound it—it is to be in a place of honor; we are the ring He wears on His finger. It is a place of love: "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me." It is a place of power—His right hand encloses all His people. It is a place of property—Christ holds His people; "All the saints are in Your hand." It is a place of discretion—we are yielded up to Christ, and Christ wields a discretionary government over us. It is a place of guidance, a place of protection—as sheep are said to be in the hand of the shepherd, so are we in the hand of Christ. As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, to be used by him, as jewels in the hands of the bride to be her ornament, so are we in the hand of Christ. Now, what says the text? It reminds us that there are some who want to pluck us out of His hand. There are those who, with false Doctrine, would deceive, if it were possible, the very Elect. There are roaring persecutors who would frighten God's saints, and so make them turn back in the day of battle. There are scheming tempters—the panderers to Hell, the jackals of the lion of the pit of Hell, who would gladly drag us to destruction.

Then there are our own hearts that would pluck us out of His hand. You know in the text before us we need not read the word *"man,"* for it is not in the original. The translators have put the word "man" in italics to show that it is not in the Greek, and so we may read it—"Neither shall *any* pluck them out of My hand." Not only—any "man," but any *devil* either. Nothing that is present shall do it, nothing to come; no principality, no power, nothing whatever that is conceivable. "None shall pluck them out of My hand." It does not merely include men, who are sometimes our worst foes, for the worst that we have are they of our own household; it also includes fallen spirits; but none shall be able to pluck us out of His hand. By no possibility shall any be able, by any of their schemes, to remove us from being His favorites, His property, His dear sons, His protected children. Oh, what a blessed Promise!

Now, do you know, while I have been preaching to you about this, I have been thinking a little about my own history before I knew the Lord. One of the things that made me want to be a Christian was this. I had seen some young lads that I was at school with, they were excellent lads, and some of them had been held up as patterns of imitation to me and to others. I saw them, though only a very few years older than myself, turn out as vain and ungodly as could be, and yet I knew them to have been excellently well disposed as boys, no, to have been very patterns; and

this kind of thought used to cross my young brain, "Is there not some means of being preserved from making a shipwreck of my life?" When I came to read the Bible, it seemed to me to be full of this Doctrine: "If you trust Christ, He will save you from all evil; He will keep you in a life of integrity and holiness while here, and He will bring you safe to Heaven at the last." I felt that I could not trust man, for I had seen some of the very best wandering far from the Truth of God; if I trusted Christ, it was not a chance as to whether I should get to Heaven, but a certainty; and I learned that if I rested all my weight upon Him He would keep me, for I found it written, "The righteous shall hold on His way, and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." I found the Apostle saying, "I am persuaded that He who has begun a good work in you will carry it on," and such-like expressions. "Why," I reasoned, "I have found an insurance office, and a good one too; I will insure my life in it; I will go to Jesus as I am, for He bids me; I will trust myself with Him." If I had listened to the Arminian theory I would never have been converted, for it never had any charms for me. A Savior who casts away His people, a God who leaves His children to perish, were not worthy of my worship, and a salvation which does not save outright is neither worth preaching nor listening to.

When I stand here and say to this assembled mass, Trust my Master, believe Him, and it is no matter of question as to whether you shall be saved, for He has said that, "he who believes and is baptized shall be saved." When I say that, I feel that I have something to say which is worth listening to! My dear Hearer, with a new heart and a right spirit you will be a new man! As you now are, if you were to be pardoned tonight you would be condemned tomorrow, for the tendencies of your nature would lead you astray. But if God shall put a new nature into you, your old nature shall not be able to control it. The new Immortal principle shall get the mastery; you shall be kept from sinning; you shall be preserved in holiness, and though you will have to mourn over your imperfection, yet you will feel that you have *God's* own Life in you; though you will realize that you are not perfect, yet you will wish you were, and this wishing to be so will be a sign of Divine Grace in your soul, and these wishes and desires will go on waxing stronger and stronger, till, having mastered sin by the Power of the Spirit, the day shall come when this body shall be dropped off, and the new life, disencumbered of the vile rags which it was compelled to wear while it was here, shall leap in its disembodied existence into Perfection and then shall wait for the trumpet's sound, and the body itself, purified and made fit for the new and higher life, shall be again inhabited, and so both the body and the soul, delivered from all sin, shall be an everlasting testimony to the Promise of Christ, for those who rest in Him shall have Eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand!

III. I have anticipated the last point, as to THE OUTLOOK OF MY TEXT INTO THE FUTURE.

If God has given you Eternal Life, that comprehends all the future. Your spiritual existence will flourish when empires and kingdoms decay. Your life will live on when the heart of this great world shall grow cold, when the pulse of the great sea shall cease to beat, when the eye of the bright sun shall grow dim with age! You possess *Eternal Life.* When, like a moment's foam which melts into the wave that bears it, the whole universe shall have gone, and left not a wreck behind, it shall be well with *you*, for you have Eternal Life! You have an existence that will run parallel with the existence of the Deity. Eternal Life! Oh, what an avenue of glory is opened by those words—Eternal Life! "Because I live," said Christ, "you shall live also." As long as there is a Christ there shall be a happy soul, and you shall be that happy soul. As long as there is a God there shall be a beatified existence, and you shall enjoy that existence, for Jesus gives you Eternal Life. Spin on, old world, until your axle is worn out. Fly on, Old Father Time, until your hourglass is broken, and you shall cease to be! Come, mighty angel! Plant your feet upon the sea and upon the land, and swear by Him who lives that time shall be no more, for even then every Christian shall still live, because Christ gives unto them Eternal Life.

Does not the next sentence also look into the future?—"They shall never perish"? They shall never cease to exist in perpetual blessedness! They shall never cease to be like God in their natures; never! Think about your having been in Heaven a thousand years—can you imagine it? A thousand years' blessed communion with the Lord Jesus! A thousand years in His bosom! A thousand years with the sight of Him to ravish your spirit! Well, but you will have just as long to be there as if you had never begun, for you shall never, never perish. When the Millennium shall come, or when the Judgment shall sit, and when all the great transactions of Prophecy shall be fulfilled, these need not distress you, for if you trust Christ you shall never—oh, turn that word over—you shall never, never, never, *never*, NEVER perish! What an eternity of glory, what unspeakable delight is wrapped up in this Promise—"They shall never perish!"

Then, surely, this is another glance into the future—"And none shall pluck them out of My hand." We shall be in His hand forever, we shall be in His heart forever, we shall be in His very Self forever—one with Him—and none shall pluck us out of His hand. Happy, happy is the man who can lay claim to such a Promise as this!

Oh, there are some of you to whom I wish this Promise belonged! It is very rich, and very full of comfort; I wish it belonged to you. Do you say, "I, too, wish it belonged to me"? Oh, Friend, I am glad to hear you say that! Do you know, Soul, that there is but one key to open this precious treasure, and that key is the Cross of the Lord Jesus? What saves you? Can you trust Him? When one told me the other day she could not trust Christ, I looked her in the face and said, "What has He done that you cannot trust Him? Can you trust me?" "Yes," she said, "I can trust my fellow creatures, but I cannot trust God." Oh, I thought, what terrible blasphemy! It was honestly spoken, and it was spoken by one who did

not perceive the greatness of the offense in it, but I do not know that there is any worse thing that can be said than that—"I cannot trust God!" Well, Sir, you have made Him a liar, then! That is the practical result of it; for if you believe a man to be honest you can always trust him. Can I trust my fellow man and not trust God? Oh, the horror of that thought! There is such an amount of blasphemy in it that I must not quote it again! Not trust Christ? "Well," says one, "but may we not have a merely natural trust and so be deceived?" I do not know of any trust in Christ except a spiritual one, nor do I believe in any. If you trust Christ you have not done that of yourself. There was never a soul that trusted Christ unless he was enabled to do it by God the Holy Spirit, and if you wholly and simply trust Christ you need not ask any questions about natural trusting or spiritual trusting.

If you trust the Lord Jesus wholly you are right. Rest on Him, then; rest on Him only, wholly, and solely, and if you perish then I do not understand the Gospel, and I cannot comprehend what the Bible means. I will tell you one thing, and then close. If you trust Christ and you perish, then I must perish most certainly, and so must all my Brothers and Sisters here who have believed in Jesus. It is all over with us if it is all over with you. When there is a storm, one passenger cannot very well go to the bottom, if he is in the ship, unless the whole of the ship's company goes too. We must go together. We have got into the lifeboat, and if the lifeboat goes down with you, it must go down with all the saints, and all the Apostles, and all the martyrs too. They went to Heaven resting upon Christ, and if you rest on Christ you will get there also.

Oh, Sinner, may you be led today to rest on Jesus and on Jesus only, and then take the text. Do not be afraid of it—"I give unto My sheep Eternal Life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 10:1-30.

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

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GOD INCARNATE, THE END OF FEAR
NO. 727

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 23, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not."
Luke 2:10.

NO SOONER did the angel of the Lord appear to the shepherds, and the Glory of the Lord shone round about them, than they were sorely afraid. It had come to this, that man was afraid of his God, and when God sent down His loving messengers with tidings of great joy, men were filled with as much fright as though the angel of Death had appeared with uplifted sword. The silence of night and its dreary gloom caused no fear in the shepherds' hearts, but the joyful herald of the skies, robed in mildest glories of Divine Grace, made them afraid. We must not condemn the shepherds on this account as though they were peculiarly timid or ignorant, for they were only acting as every other person in that age would have done under the same circumstances. Not because they were simple shepherds were they filled with fear, but it is probable that if they had been well-instructed Prophets they would have displayed the same feeling; for there are many instances recorded in Scripture in which the foremost men of their time trembled and felt a horror of great darkness when special manifestations of God were given to them. In fact, a slavish fear of God was so common that *a tradition* had grown out of it, which was all but universally received as nothing less than the Truth of God. It was generally believed that every supernatural manifestation was to be regarded as a token of speedy death. "We shall surely die because we have seen God" was not only Manoah's conclusion, but that of most men of his period. Few indeed were those happy minds who, like Manoah's wife, could reason in a more cheerful style, "If the Lord had meant to destroy us He would not have showed us such things as these."

It became *the settled conviction* of all men, whether wise or simple, whether good or bad, that a manifestation of God was not so much to be rejoiced in as to be dreaded; even as Jacob said, "How dreadful is this place! It is none other but the House of God." Doubtless the spirit which originated this tradition was much fostered by the *legal dispensation*, which is better fitted for trembling servants than for rejoicing sons. It was of the bond woman, and it gendered into bondage. The solemn night in which its greatest institution was ordained was a night of trembling, Death was there in the slaughter of the lamb; blood was there sprinkled on a conspicuous part of the house; fire was there to roast the lamb, all the emblems of judgment were there to strike the mind with awe. It was at the dread hour of midnight when the solemn family conclave was assembled, the door being shut; the guests themselves standing in an uneasy attitude, and awestricken, for their hearts could hear the wings

of the Destroying Angel as he passed by the house. Afterwards, when Israel came into the wilderness, and the Law was proclaimed, do we not read that the people stood afar off, and that bounds were set about the mountain, and if so much as a beast touched the mountain it was to be stoned, or thrust through with a dart? It was a day of fear and trembling when God spoke to them out of the fire.

Not with the melting notes of harp, psaltery, or dulcimer did God's Law come to His people's ears; no soft wings of angels brought the message, and no sunny smiles of Heaven sweetened it to the mind; but with sound of trumpet and thunder, out of the midst of blazing lightning, with Sinai altogether on a smoke, the Law was given. The Law's voice was, "Come not near here!" The spirit of Sinai is fear and trembling. The legal ceremonies were such as rather to inspire fear than to beget trust. The worshipper at the Temple saw bloodshed from the first of the year to the end of the year; the morning was ushered in with the blood-shedding of the lamb, and the evening shades could not gather without blood again being spilt upon the altar. God was in the midst of the camp, but the pillar of cloud and fire was His unapproachable pavilion. The emblem of His Glory was concealed behind the curtain of blue and scarlet and fine twined linen; behind which only one foot might pass, and that but once in the year. Men spoke of the God of Israel with bated breath, and with voices hushed and solemn. They had not learned to say, "Our Father which are in Heaven." They had not received the Spirit of Adoption, and were not able to say Abba; they smarted under the spirit of bondage, which made them sorely afraid when by any peculiar manifestation the Lord displayed His Presence among them. At the bottom of all this slavish dread lay *sin*.

We never find Adam afraid of God, nor of any manifestation of Deity while he was an obedient creature in Paradise, but no sooner had he touched the fatal fruit than he found that he was naked and hid himself. When he heard the Voice of the Lord God walking in the Garden in the cool of the day, Adam was afraid and hid himself from the Presence of the Lord God among the trees of the Garden. Sin makes miserable cowards of us all. See the man who once could hold delightful converse with his Maker now dreading to hear his Maker's Voice and skulking in the grove like a felon who knows his guilt, and is afraid to meet the officers of justice.

Beloved, in order to remove this dread nightmare of slavish fear from the breast of humanity, where its horrible influence represses all the noblest aspirations of the soul, our Lord Jesus Christ came in the flesh. This is one of the works of the devil which He was manifested to destroy. Angels came to proclaim the good news of the advent of the Incarnate God, and the very first note of their song was a foretaste of the sweet result of His coming to all those who shall receive Him. The angel said, "Fear not," as though the times of fear were over, and the days of hope and joy had arrived. "Fear not." These words were not meant for those trembling shepherds only, but were intended for you and for me, yes for all nations to whom the glad tidings shall come. "Fear not." Let God no

longer be the object of your slavish dread! Stand not at a distance from Him any more. The Word is made flesh. God has descended to tabernacle among men, that there may be no hedge of fire, no yawning gulf between God and man.

Into this subject I wish to go this morning as God may help me. I am sensible of the value of the theme, and am very conscious that I cannot do it justice. I would earnestly ask God the Holy Spirit to make you drink of the golden cup of the Incarnation of Christ such draughts as I have enjoyed in my quiet meditations. I can scarcely desire more delight for my dearest friends. There is no antidote for fear more excellent than the subject of that midnight song, the first and best of Christmas chorales, which from its first word to its last note chimes out the sweet message, which begins with, "Fear not."—

"It is my sweetest comfort, Lord,
And will forever be,
To muse upon the gracious truth
Of Your Humanity.
Oh joy! There sits in our flesh,
Upon a throne of light,
One of a human mother born,
In perfect Godhead bright!
Though earth's foundations should be moved,
Down to their lowest deep;
Though all the trembling universe
Into destruction sweep;
Forever God, forever Man,
My Jesus shall endure;
And fixed on Him, my hope remains
Eternally secure."

Dear Friends, I shall first detain your attention with a few remarks upon *the fear* of which I have already spoken; then, secondly, we shall invite your earnest attention to *the remedy* which the angels came to proclaim; and then, thirdly, as we may have time, we shall endeavor to *make an application of this remedy to various cases.*

I. Turning to THE FEAR of the text, it may be well to discriminate. There is a kind of fear towards God from which we must not wish to be free. There is that lawful, necessary, admirable, excellent fear which is always due from the creature to the Creator, from the subject to the king, yes, and from the child toward the parent. That holy, filial fear of God, which makes us dread sin, and compels us to be obedient to His command, is to be cultivated; "we had fathers of our flesh, and we gave them reverence, shall we not be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?" This is the "fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom." To have a holy awe of our most holy, just, righteous, and tender Parent is a privilege, not a bondage. Godly fear is not the "fear which has torment." Perfect love does not cast out, but dwells with it in joyful harmony. The angels perfectly love God, and yet with holy fear they veil their faces with their wings as they approach Him; and when we shall in Glory behold the face of God, and shall be filled with all His fullness, we shall not cease humbly and reverently to adore the Infinite Majesty. Holy fear is a work of the Holy Spirit, and woe unto the man who does not possess it; let him

boast as he may, his "feeding himself without fear" is a mark of his hypocrisy.

The fear which is to be avoided, is *slavish fear*—the fear which perfect love casts out, as Sarah cast out the bondwoman and her son. That trembling which keeps us at a distance from God, which makes us think of Him as a Spirit with whom we can have no communion; as a Being who has no care for us except to punish us, and for whom consequently we have no care except to escape if possible from His terrible Presence. This fear sometimes arises in men's hearts from their *thoughts dwelling exclusively upon the Divine Greatness.* Is it possible to peer long into the vast abyss of Infinity and not to fear? Can the mind yield itself up to the thought of the Eternal, Self-Existent, Infinite One without being filled, first with awe and then with dread? What am I? An aphid creeping upon a rosebud is a more considerable creature in relation to the universe of beings than I can be in comparison with God. What am I? A grain of dust, that does not turn the scale of the most delicate balance is a greater thing to man than a man is to Jehovah. At best we are less than nothing and vanity. But there is more to abase us than this. We have had the impertinence to be disobedient to the will of this Great One; and now the goodness and greatness of His Nature are as a current against which sinful humanity struggles in vain, for the Irresistible torrent must run its course and overwhelm every opponent. What does the great God seem to us out of Christ but a stupendous rock, threatening to crush us, or a fathomless sea, hastening to swallow us up? The contemplation of the Divine Greatness may of itself fill man with horror, and cast him into unutterable misery! Dwell long upon such themes, and like Job, you will tremble before Jehovah, who shakes the earth out of her place, and makes the pillars tremble.

Each one of the sterner attributes of God will cause the same fear. Think of His Power by which He rolls the stars along, and lay your hand upon your mouth! Think of His Wisdom by which He numbers the clouds, and settles the ordinances of Heaven. Meditate upon any one of these attributes, but especially upon His Justice, and upon that devouring fire which burns unceasingly against sin, and it is no wonder if the soul becomes full of fear. Meanwhile let *a sense of sin* with its great whip of wire, flagellate the conscience, and man will dread the bare idea of God. For this is the burden of the voice of Conscience to guilty man, "If you were an obedient creature, this God were still terrible to you, for the heavens are not pure in His sight, and He charged His angels with folly. What are you that you should be just with God, or have any claims upon Him; for you have offended, you have lifted the hand of your rebellion against the Infinite Majesty of Omnipotence—what can become of you? What can be your portion but to be set up forever as a monument of His righteous Wrath?"

Now such a fear as that being very easily created in the thoughtful mind, and being indeed, as it seems to me, the natural heritage of man, as the result of sin is most doleful and injurious. For wherever there is a slavish dread of the Divine Being, *it alienates man most thoroughly from*

his God. We are by our evil nature enemies to God, and the imagination that God is cruel, harsh, and terrible, adds fuel to the fire of our enmity. Those whom we slavishly dread we cannot love. You could not make your child show forth love to you if its little heart was full of fear; if it dreaded to hear your footsteps, and was alarmed at the sound of your voice, it could not love you. You might obey some huge monster because you were afraid of him, but to love him would be impossible. It is one of the masterpieces of Satan to deceive man by presenting to his mind a hateful picture of God. He knows that men cannot love that which terrifies them, and therefore he paints the God of Grace as a hard, unforgiving Being who will not receive the penitent and have pity upon the sorrowful. God is Love! Surely if men had but Grace enough to see the beauty of that portrait of God—that miniature sketched with a single line, "God is love!" they would willingly serve such a God. When the Holy Spirit enables the mind to perceive the Character of God, the heart cannot refuse to love Him. Base, fallen, depraved as men are, when they are illuminated from on high so as to judge rightly of God, their hearts melt under the genial beams of Divine Love, and they love God because He has first loved them. But there is the masterpiece of Satan, that he will not let the understanding perceive the excellence of God's Character, and then the heart cannot love that which the understanding does not perceive to be loveable.

In addition to alienating the heart from God, this fear *creates a prejudice against God's Gospel of Grace.* There are persons in this place this morning who believe that if they were religious they would be miserable. It is the settled conviction of half of London that to trust in Jesus and to be obedient to God, which is the essence of all true religion, would be wretchedness itself. "Oh," says the worldly man, "I should have to give up my pleasure if I were to become a Christian." Now, this is one of the most wicked slanders that was ever invented, and yet it has current belief everywhere. It is the popular theology that to be an enemy to God is happiness, but to be the friend of God is misery. What an opinion men must have of God, when they believe that to love Him is to be wretched! Oh, could they comprehend, could they but know how good God is, instead of imagining that His service would be slavery, they would understand that to be His friend is to occupy the highest and happiest position which created beings can occupy.

This fear in some men *puts them out of all hope of ever being saved.* Thinking God to be an ungenerous Being, they keep at a distance from Him, and if there are some sweet attractions now and then in a sermon, some gentle meltings of conscience, the good desire never matures into the practical resolve. They do not say, "I will arise and go unto my Father," because they do not know Him as a Father, they only know Him as a consuming fire. A man does not say, "I will arise and go unto a consuming fire." No, but like Jonah, he would gladly pay his fare, regardless of the expense, and go to Tarshish to flee from the Presence of the Lord. This it is that makes calamity of being a man at all to most men, that they cannot get away from God, since they imagine that if they

could but escape from His Presence they would then wander into bliss; but being doomed to be where God is, they then conceive that for them wretchedness and misery alone remain. The soft warnings of Mercy and the thundering of Justice are alike powerless upon men so long as their hearts are seared and rendered callous by an unholy dread of God.

This wicked dread of God frequently *drives men to extremities of sin.* The man says, "There is no hope for me. I have made one fatal mistake in being God's enemy, and I am irretrievably ruined. There is no hope that I shall ever be restored to happiness or peace. Then what will I do? I will cast the reins upon the neck of my passions, I will defy fate and take my chances. I will get such happiness as may be found in sin. If I cannot be reconciled to Heaven I will be a good servant of Hell." And therefore men have been known to hasten from one crime to another with a malicious inventiveness of rebellion against God, as if they could never be satisfied nor contented till they had heaped up more and more rebellions against the Majesty of God whom in their hearts they dread with a burning Satanic dread mingled with hate. If they could but comprehend that He is still willing to receive the rebellious, that His heart yearns towards sinners; if they could but once believe that He is Love and wills not the death of a sinner but had rather that he should turn unto Him and live, surely the course of their lives would be changed; but the god of this world blinds them, and maligns the Lord until they count it folly to submit to Him.

Dear Friends, this evil which works a thousand ills operates in ways of evil quite innumerable. *It dishonors God.* Oh, it is infamous, it is villainous to make out our God, who is Light and in whom is no darkness at all, to be an object of horrible fear. It is infernal; I may say no less; it is devilish to the highest degree to paint Him as a demon, who is Jehovah, the God of Love. Oh, the impertinence of the Prince of Darkness, and the madness of man to consent to him, that God should be depicted as being unwilling to forgive, unkind, hard, cruel; whereas He is *LOVE*—supremely and above all things, LOVE! He is Just, but all the more truly loving because He is Just. He is True, and therefore sure to punish sin, yet even punishing sin because it were not good to let sin go unpunished. This is base ingratitude on the part of a much-receiving creature that he should malign his Benefactor.

The evil which is thus done to God recoils upon man, for this *fear has torment.* No more tormenting misery in the world than to think of God as being our implacable foe. You Christians who have lost, for a while, the Spirit of Adoption, you who have wandered a distance from God, nothing can be more tormenting to you than the fear that the Lord has cast you away and will not again receive you. You backsliders, nothing can hold you back from your heavenly Father like a dread of Him. If you can but really know that He is not to be dreaded with slavish fear, you will come to Him as your child does to you, and you will say, "My Father, I have offended—pity me! My Father, I am vexed and grieved for my sin—forgive me, receive me again into Your arms, and help me by Your mighty Grace that from now on I may walk in Your Commandments, and be obedient

to Your will." My dear Friends, you who know anything about spiritual life, don't you feel that when you have sweet thoughts of God breathed into you from above, and have His special love to you shed abroad in your hearts—don't you feel that it is *then* that you are most holy? Have you not perceived that the only way in which you can grow in that which is morally and spiritually lovely, is by having your Gracious God high in your esteem, and feeling His precious Love firing your hearts?

That they may be like little children is the very thing which God desires for His Elect ones! It is this which His Spirit works in His chosen; it is to this that we must come if we are to be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Slavish fear is so opposed to the child-like spirit that it is as the poison of asps to it. Dread and fear bring out everything in us that is of the man rather than of the child, for it stirs us up to resist the object of our fear. An assured confidence in the Goodness of God casts out fear and brings forth everything that is child-like in us. Have you ever seen a child trust some big, rough man, and melt him down by its trustfulness? It trusted where there was no ground for trust apparently, and made ground for itself. That same child, simply and implicitly trusting in a good and generous father is a noble picture, and if I, a poor, weak, feeble child, conscious that I am such, knowing that I am all folly and weakness, can just believe in my Good, Great God, through Jesus Christ, and come and trust myself with Him, and leave Him to do as He likes with me, believing that He will not be unkind, and cannot be unwise; if I can wholly repose in His Love and be obedient to His Will, why then I shall have reached the highest point that the creature can reach; the Holy Spirit will then have worked His finished work in me, and I shall be fit for Heaven. Beloved, it is because fear opposes this, and prevents this, that I would say with the angel, "Fear not."

II. I fear I weary you while I speak upon this somewhat sad theme, and therefore with as much brevity as the abundance of the matter may permit, let us notice in the second place, THE CURE FOR THIS FEAR, which the angel came to proclaim. It lies in this—"Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."—

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The Holy, Just and Sacred Three,
Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His Grace removes my sins."

That is the remedy—God with us—God made flesh. Let us try and show this from the angel's song.

According to the text they were not to fear, first of all, because *the angel had come to bring them good news.* How does it run? It says, "I bring you good tidings of great joy." But what was this Gospel? Further on we are told that the Gospel was the fact that Christ was born. So, then, it is good news to men that Christ is born, that God has come down and taken Manhood into union with Himself. Verily this *is* glad tidings. He who made the heavens sleeps in a manger. What then? Why

then God is not of necessity an enemy to man, because here is God actually taking Manhood into alliance with Deity. There cannot be permanent, inveterate, rooted enmity between the two natures, or otherwise the Divine Nature could not have taken the human into hypostatical union with itself. Is there not comfort in that? You are a poor, erring, feeble man, and that which makes you afraid of the Lord is this fear that there is an enmity between God and man; but there need not be such enmity, for your Maker has actually taken Manhood into union with Himself.

Do you not see another thought? The Eternal seems to be so far away from us. He is Infinite, and we are such little creatures. There appears to be a great gulf fixed between man and God, even on the ground of creatureship. But observe, He who is God has also become Man. We never heard that God took the nature of angels into union with Himself; we may therefore say that between Godhead and angelhood there must be an Infinite distance still; but here the Lord has actually taken Manhood into union with Himself; there is therefore no longer a great gulf fixed, on the contrary, here is a marvelous union; Godhead has entered into marriage bonds with manhood. O my Soul, you do not stand now like a poor lone orphan wailing across the deep sea after your Father who has gone far away and cannot hear you; you do not now sob and sigh like an infant left naked and helpless, its Maker having gone too far away to regard its needs or listen to its cries. No, your Maker has become like yourself! Is that too strong a word to use? He without whom was not anything made that was made is that same Word who lived and walked among us and was made flesh, made flesh in such a way that He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. O Manhood, was there ever such news as this for you! Poor Manhood, you weak worm of the dust, far lower than the angels, lift up your head and be not afraid! Poor Manhood, born in weakness, living in toil, covered with sweat, and dying at last to be eaten by the worms, be not abashed even in the presence of seraphs, for next to God is man, and not even an archangel can come in between; no, not next to God, there is scarcely that to be said, for Jesus who is God is Man also; Jesus Christ, Eternal God, was born, and lived and died as we also do. That is the first word of comfort to expel our fear.

The second point that takes away fear is that this Man who was also God was actually *born*. Observe the angel's word, "Unto you is *born."*

Our Lord Jesus Christ is in some senses more man than Adam. Adam was not born; Adam never had to struggle through the risks and weaknesses of infancy; he knew not the littlenesses of childhood—he was full grown at once. Father Adam could not sympathize with me as a baby and a child. But how man-like is Jesus! He is cradled with us in the manger; He does not begin with us in mid-life, as Adam, but He accompanies us in the pains and feebleness and infirmities of infancy, and He continues with us even to the grave. Beloved, this is such sweet comfort. He who is God this day was once an Infant, so that if my cares are little and even trivial and comparatively infantile, I may go to Him, for

He was once a Child. Though the great ones of the earth may sneer at the child of poverty, and say, "You are too mean, and your trouble is too slight for pity," I remember with humble joy that the King of Heaven did hang upon a woman's breast, and was wrapped in swaddling bands, and therefore I tell Him all my griefs. How wonderful that He should have been an Infant, and yet should be God over all, blessed forever! I am no longer afraid of God; this blessed link between me and God, the Holy Child Jesus, has taken all fear away.

Observe, the angel told them somewhat of His *office*, as well as of His birth. "Unto you is born this day a *Savior."* The very reason for which He was born and came into this world was that He might deliver us from sin. What, then, was it that made us afraid? Were we not afraid of God because we felt that we were lost through sin? Well then, here is joy upon joy. Here is not only the Lord come among us as a Man, but made Man in order to save man from that which separated him from God. I feel as if I could burst out into a weeping for some here who have been spending their living riotously and gone far away from God their Father by their evil ways. I know they are afraid to come back. They think that the Lord will not receive them, that there is no mercy for such sinners as they have been. Oh, but think of it—Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost. He was born to save. If He does not save He was born in vain, for the objective of His birth was salvation. If He shall not be a Savior, then the mission of God to earth has missed its end, for its design was that lost sinners might be saved. Lost one, oh, lost one, if there were news that an angel had come to save you there might be some cheer in it; but there are better tidings still. GOD has come; the Infinite, the Almighty, has stooped from the highest Heaven that He may pick you up, a poor undone and worthless worm. Is there not comfort here? Does not the Incarnate Savior take away the horrible dread which hangs over men like a black pall?

Note that the angel did not forget to describe *the Person* of this Savior—"A Savior which is *Christ."* There is His Manhood. As Man He was anointed. *"The Lord."* There is His Godhead. Yes, this is the solid Truth of God upon which we plant our feet. Jesus of Nazareth is God; He who was conceived in the womb of the virgin and born in Bethlehem's manger is now, and always was God over all, blessed forever. There is no Gospel if He is not God. It is no news to me to tell me that a great Prophet is born. There have been great Prophets before; but the world has never been redeemed from evil by mere testimony to the Truth of God, and never will be. Tell me that God is born, that God Himself has espoused our nature, and taken it into union with Himself, then the bells of my heart ring merry peals, for now may I come to God since God has come to me.

You will observe, dear Friends, however, that the substance of what the angel said lay in this, *"Unto you."* You will never get true comfort from the Incarnate Savior till you perceive your *personal* interest in Him. Christ as Man was a Representative Man. There never were but two thoroughly representative men; the first is Adam—Adam obedient and

the whole race stands, Adam disobedient and the whole race falls. "In Adam all die." Now, the Man Jesus is the Second Representative Man. He does not represent the whole human race, He represents as many as His Father gave Him; He represents a chosen company. Now, whatever Christ did, if you belong to those who are in Him He did for you. So that Christ circumcised or Christ crucified, Christ dead or Christ living, Christ buried or Christ risen, you are a partaker of all that He did and all that He is, for you are reckoned as one with Him. See then, the joy and comfort of the Incarnation of Christ. Does Jesus, as Man, take Manhood up to Heaven? He has taken me up there! Father Adam fell, and I fell, for I was in him. The Lord Jesus Christ rises, and I rise if I am in Him. See, Beloved, when Jesus Christ was nailed to the Cross all His Elect were nailed there, and they suffered and died in Him. When He was put into the grave the whole of His people lay slumbering there in Him, for they were in the loins of Jesus as Levi was in the loins of Abraham; and when He rose they rose and received the foretaste of their own future resurrection, because He lives they shall live also; and now that He has gone up on high to claim the Throne, He has claimed the Throne for every soul that is in Him. Oh, this is joy indeed! Then how can I be afraid of God, for this day, by faith, I, a poor undeserving sinner, having put my trust in Jesus, am bold to say that I sit upon the Throne of God. Think not that we have said too much, for in the Person of Christ every Believer is raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Because as Jesus is there Representatively, we are each one of us there in Him.

I wish that I had power to bring out this precious Doctrine of the Incarnation as I desire, but the more one muses upon it, the more happy one becomes. Let us view it as an all-important Truth of God that Jesus, the Son of God, has really come in the flesh. It is so important a Truth that we have three witnesses appointed to keep it before us upon earth. We have been insisting many times in this place upon the spirituality of Christian worship. We have shown that the outward in religion, by itself, avails nothing; it is the inward spirit that is the great thing. I must confess that I have sometimes said in myself, I hope not rebelliously, "What is this Baptism for, and what is this Communion of the Lord's Supper for?" These two outward ordinances, whatever may be their excellent uses, have been the two things around which more errors have clustered than around anything else; and I have heard it said, by friends inclined to follow more fully the teachings of the Quakers, "Why not put aside the outward and visible altogether? Let it be the Spirit Baptism, and not the water; let there be no bread and wine, but let there be fellowship with Christ without the outward sign." I must confess, though I dare not go with it, because I hope to be held fast by the plain testimony of Scripture, yet my heart has somewhat gone with the temptation, and I have half-heartedly said, "Men will always pervert these two ordinances, would it not be as well to have done with them?" While I have been exercised upon the point, conscious that the ordinances must be right, and must be held, I have rested upon that text, "There are three

who bear witness in earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood." And what do they bear witness to? They bear witness to the mission of Jesus as the Christ, in other words, to the real Incarnation of God.

They bear witness to the materialism of Christ. Have you ever noticed that when people have given up the two outward ordinances, they have usually betrayed a tendency to give up the literal fact that "God was made flesh"? The literal fact that Christ was really a Man has generally been doubted or thrown into the background when the two outward ordinances have been given up. I believe that these two symbolical ordinances, which are a link between the spiritual and the material, are set up on purpose to show that Christ Jesus, though most gloriously a Spirit, was also a Man clothed in a body of real flesh and blood like our own;, so that He could be touched and handled even as He said, "Handle Me and see; a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have." When I think of the Holy Spirit who bears witness that Christ was really a Man, I thank Him for that witness; then I turn to the water, and when I read that Christ was publicly baptized in the Jordan, I perceive that He could not have been a phantom; He could not have been a mere appearance, for He was immersed in water; He must have been a solid substantial Man! The preservation of the ordinance of Baptism is a witness to the reality of the Incarnate God. Then comes the blood. He could not have shed blood on Calvary if He had been a ghost. There could have been no blood streaming down from His side when the spear pierced Him if He had been only a ghostly apparition; He must have been solid flesh and blood like ourselves; and as often as we come to His Table, and we take the cup and hear it said—"This cup is the New Covenant in My blood," there is a third witness on earth to the fact that Jesus did appear in very flesh and blood among men. So the Spirit, the water, and the blood are the three standing testimonies in the church of God that Christ was God, and that He was also really, solidly, and substantially Man.

I shall delight in the ordinances all the more because of this. Those two ordinances serve to make us remember that Christ was really flesh and blood, and that religion has something to do with this flesh and blood of ours. This very body is to rise again from the tomb; Jesus came to deliver this poor flesh from corruption; and so, while we must always keep the spiritual uppermost, we are prevented from casting away the material body as though that were of the devil. Christ purified as well the realm of matter as the realm of spirit; and in both He reigns triumphant. There is much comfort here.

III. Lastly, we can only occupy a few seconds in APPLYING THE CURE TO VARIOUS CASES.

Child of God, you say, "I dare not come to God today, I feel so weak." Fear not, for He who is born in Bethlehem said, "A bruised reed I will not break, and the smoking flax I will not quench." "I shall never get to Heaven," says another, "I shall never see God's face with acceptance; I am so tempted." "Fear not," for you have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of your infirmities, for He was tempted in all points like as you are." "But I am so lonely in the world," says another,

"no man cares for me." There is one Man at any rate who does so care; a true Man like yourself. He is your Brother still, and does not forget the lonely spirit.

But I hear a sinner say, "I am afraid to go to God this morning and confess that I am a sinner." Well, do not go to God but go to Christ. Surely you would not be afraid of Him. Think of God *in* Christ, not out of Christ. If you could but know Jesus you would go to Him at once; you would not be afraid to tell Him your sins, for you would know that He would say, "Go, and sin no more." "I cannot pray," says one, "I am afraid to pray." What? Afraid to pray when it is a Man who listens to you! You might dread the face of God, but when you see God in human flesh, why be alarmed? Go, poor Sinner, go to Jesus. "I feel," says one, "unfit to come." You may be unfit to come to God, but you cannot be unfit to come to Jesus. There is a fitness necessary to stand in the Holy Hill of the Lord, but there is no fitness needed in coming to the Lord Jesus. Come as you are, guilty, and lost, and ruined. Come just as you are, and He will receive you. "Oh," says another, "I cannot trust." I can understand your not being able to trust the great Invisible God, but cannot you trust that dying, bleeding Son of Man who is also the Son of God?

"But I cannot hope," says another, "that He would even look on me." And yet He used to look on such as you are. He received publicans and sinners and ate with them, and even harlots were not driven from His Presence. Oh, since God has thus taken Man into union with Himself be not afraid! If I speak to one who by reason of sin has wandered so far away from God that he is even afraid to think of God's name, yet inasmuch as Jesus Christ is called "the sinner's Friend," I pray you think of *Him*, poor Soul, as *your* Friend! And, oh, may the Spirit of God open your blind eyes to see that there is no cause for your keeping away from God except your own mistaken thoughts of Him! May you believe that He is able and willing to save to the uttermost! May you understand His good and gracious Character, His readiness to pass by transgression, iniquity, and sin! And may the sweet influences of Divine Grace quicken you to come to Him this very morning! God grant that Jesus Christ, the Hope of Glory, may be formed in you; and then you may well sing, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, and goodwill toward men." Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 2:1-24.

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END VOLUME 12