GOOD CHEER FOR THE NEW YEAR
NO. 728

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 6, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year."
Deuteronomy 11:12.

THE Israelites had sojourned for a while in Egypt, a land which only produces food for its inhabitants by the laborious process of irrigating its fields. They had mingled with the sons of Ham as they watched with anxious eyes the swelling of the river Nile; they had shared in the incessant labors by which the waters were preserved in reservoirs, and afterwards eked out by slow degrees to nourish the various crops. Moses tells them in this chapter that the land of Palestine was not at all like Egypt; it was a land which did not so much depend on the labor of the inhabitants as upon the good will of the God of heaven. He calls it a land of hills and valleys, a land of springs and rivers, a land dependent not upon the rivers of earth but upon the rain of heaven, and he styles it in conclusion, "A land which the Lord your God cares for: the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year."

Observe here a type of the condition of the natural and the spiritual man. In this world in temporals and in all other respects the merely carnal man has to be his own providence, and to look to himself for all his needs. Hence his cares are always many, and frequently they become so heavy that they drive him to desperation. He lives a life of care, anxiety, sorrow, fretfulness and disappointment; he dwells in Egypt, and he knows that there is no joy, or comfort, or provision if it does not wear out his soul in winning it. But the spiritual man dwells in another country; his faith makes him a citizen of another land. It is true he endures the same toils, and experiences the same afflictions as the ungodly, but they deal with him after another fashion, for they come as a gracious Father's appointments and they go at the bidding of loving wisdom. By faith the godly man casts his care upon God who cares for him, and he walks without worrying care because he knows himself to be the child of heaven's loving-kindness, for whom all things work together for good. God is his great guardian and friend, and all his concerns are safe in the hands of infinite grace. Even in the year of drought the believer dwells in green pastures, and lies down beside the still waters; but as for the ungodly, he abides in the wilderness and hears the mutterings of that curse, "Cursed is he who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm: he shall be like the heath in the desert; he shall not see when good comes."

Do you question my assertion, that Canaan is a fitting type of the present condition of the Christian? We have frequently insisted upon it that it is a far better type of the militant believer here than of the glorified saint in the New Jerusalem. Canaan is sometimes used by us in our hymns as the picture of heaven, but it is scarcely so; a moment's reflection will show that it is far more distinctly the picture of the present state of every believer. While we are under conviction of sin we are like Israel in the wilderness, we have no rest for the sole of our feet; but when we put our trust in Jesus we do as it were cross the river and leave the wilderness behind: "we who have believed do enter into rest," for "there remains a rest for the people of God." Believers have entered into the finished salvation which is provided for us in Christ Jesus. The blessings of our inheritance are in a great measure already in our possession; the state of salvation is no longer a land of promise, but it is a land possessed and enjoyed. We have peace with God; we are even now justified by faith. "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God." Covenant blessings are at this moment actually ours, just as the portions of the land of Canaan became actually in the possession of the various tribes. It is true there is an enemy in Canaan, an enemy to be driven out—indwelling sin, which is entrenched in our hearts as in walled cities, and fleshly lusts which are like the chariots of iron with which we have to do war—but the land is ours; we have the covenanted heritage at this moment in our possession, and the foes who would rob us of it shall, by the sword of faith, and the weapon of all prayer, be utterly rooted out.

The Christian, like Israel in Canaan, is not under the government of Moses now; he has done with Moses once and for all. Moses was magnified and made honorable as he climbed to the top of the hill, and with a kiss from God's lips was carried into heaven. Even so the law has been magnified and made honorable in the person of Christ, but has ceased to reign over the believer; and as Joshua was the leader of the Israelites when they came into Canaan, so is Jesus our Leader now. He it is who leads us on from victory to victory, and He will not sheathe His sword till He has taken unto Himself, and given unto us His followers the full possession of all the holiness and happiness which covenant engagements have secured for us. For these and many other reasons it is clear that the children of Israel in Canaan were typically in the same condition as we are now who, having believed in Jesus, have our citizenship in heaven. Beloved, those of you who are in such a state will relish the text. It is to such persons that the text is addressed. The eyes of the Lord, your God, are always upon you, O believer, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year. You who trust in Jesus are under the guidance of the Great Joshua; you are fighting sin; you have obtained salvation; you have left the wilderness of conviction and fear behind you, come into the Canaan of faith, and now the eyes of God are upon you and upon your state from the opening of the year to its close. May the Holy Spirit bless us; and we shall, first, *take the text as we find it;* secondly, *we*

shall turn the text over; thirdly, *we shall blot the text out;* and then, fourthly, *we shall distil practical lessons from the text.*

I. First, we will consider THE TEXT AS WE FIND IT. The first word that glitters before us, like a jewel in a crown, is that word "eyes." "The eyes of the Lord." What is meant here? Surely not mere omniscience. In that sense the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good. God sees Hagar as well as Sarah, and beholds Judas when he gives the traitorous kiss quite as surely as He beholds the holy woman when she washes the feet of the Savior with her tears. No, there is love in the text to sweeten observation. "The Lord knows the righteous" with a knowledge which is over and above that of omniscience; the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, not merely to see them, but to view them with complacency and delight; not merely observe them, but observes them with affectionate care and interest. The meaning of the text then is first, that *God's love is always upon His people.* Oh, Christians, think of this (it is rather to be thought of than to be spoken of), that God loves us! The big heart of Deity is set upon us poor, insignificant, undeserving, worthless beings. God loves us, loves us forever, never thinks of us without loving thoughts, never regards us, nor speaks of us, nor acts towards us except in love. God is love in a certain sense towards all, for He is full of benevolence to all His creatures; love is, indeed, His essence; but there is an unfathomable depth when that word is used in reference to His elect ones who are the objects of distinguishing grace, redeemed by blood, enfranchised by power, adopted by condescension, and preserved by faithfulness. beloved, do not ask me to speak of this love, but implore God the Holy Spirit to speak of it to your inmost souls. The loving eyes of God are always upon you, the poorest and most obscure of His people, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year.

The expression of the text teaches us that *the Lord takes a personal interest in us.* It is not here said that God loves us, and therefore sends an angel to protect and watch over us; but the Lord does it Himself. The eyes that observe us are God's own eyes, the guardian under whose protection we are placed is God Himself. Some mothers put out their children to nurse, but God never; all his babes hang upon His own breast, and are carried in His own arms. It is little that we could do if we had to perform everything personally, and therefore most of the things are done by proxy. The captain when the vessel is to be steered across the deep, must have his hour of sleep, and then the second in command, or some other, must manage the vessel; but you will observe that in times of emergency the captain is called up and takes upon himself personal responsibility. See him as he himself anxiously heaves the lead, and stands at the helm or at the look-out, for he can trust no one else in perilous moments. It seems from the text that it is always a time of emergency with God's people, for their great Lord always exercises a personal care over them. He has never said to His angels, "I will dispense with My own watching, and you shall guard My saints," but while He gives them

charge concerning His people, yet He Himself is personally their keeper and their shield. "I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it I will keep it night and day."

You have sometimes, when you have been very sick, sent for a physician, and it may be that he has been engaged somewhere else, but he has an assistant who probably is quite as skillful as himself, yet, as soon as that assistant comes, such has been your confidence in the man himself for whom you have sent that you feel quite disappointed; you wanted to see the man whom you had tried in days gone by. There is no fear of our being put off with any substitute for our God. Oh, beloved, when I think of the text, I feel of the same mind as Moses when God said, "I will send My angel before you." "No," Moses in effect said, "that will not suffice: if *Your presence* go not with us, carry us not up from here." My Lord, I cannot be put off with Gabriel or Michael, I cannot be content with the brightest of the seraphs who stand before Your throne; it is Your presence I need, and blessed be Your name, it is Your presence which the text promises to give. The anxious mother is glad to have a careful nurse upon whom she may rely, but in the crisis of the disease when the little one's life trembles in the balance, she says, "Nurse, I must sit up myself with the child tonight." And though it is the third, perhaps the fourth night, since the mother has had sleep, yet her eyes will not close as long as the particular point of danger is still in view. See, my brothers and sisters, see the loving tenderness of our gracious God. Never, never, never, does He delegate to others, however good or kind, or to any secondary agents, however active or powerful, the care of His people; His own eyes, without a substitute, must watch over us.

Further, the text reminds us of *the unwearied power of God towards His people.* What? Can His eyes always be upon us? This would not be possible if He were not God. To be always upon one object, man can scarcely do that; but where there are ten thousand times ten thousand objects, how can the same eyes always be upon every one among so many! I know what unbelief has said to you. He has whispered, "He brings forth the stars, He calls them all by their names, how then can He notice so mean an insect as you are?" Then we have said, "My way is passed over from God: God has forgotten me; my God has forsaken me." But here comes the text. Not only has He not forgotten you, but He has never *once* taken His eyes off you, and though you are one among so many, yet He has observed you as narrowly, as carefully, as tenderly as if there were not another child in the divine family, nor another one whose prayers were to be heard, or whose cares were to be relieved. What would you think of yourself if you knew that you were the only saved soul in the world, the only elect one of God, the only one purchased on the bloody tree? Why you would feel, "How God must care for me! How He must watch over me! Surely He will never take His eyes off such a special favorite." And it is the same with you, beloved, though the family is so large, as if you were the only one. The eyes of the Lord never grow wea-

ry—He neither slumbers nor sleeps; both by day and night He observes each one of His people.

If you put these things together, intense affection, personal interest, unwearied power, and then if you remember that all this time God's heart is actuated by unchanging purposes of divine grace towards you, surely there will be enough to make you lose yourself in wonder, love, and praise. You have sinned in the past of your history, but your sin has never made Him love you less because He never looked upon you as you are personally considered, naked, and abstract in yourself, but He saw you and loved you in Christ in the eternal purpose even when you were dead in trespasses and sins; He has seen you in Christ ever since, and has never ceased to love you. It is true you have been very faulty (what tears this ought to cost you!) but as He never loved you for your good works, He has never cast you away for your bad works, but has beheld you as washed in the atoning blood of Jesus till you are whiter than snow, and He has seen you clothed in the perfect righteousness of your Surety, and therefore looked upon you and regarded you as though you were without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Grace has always set you before the Lord's eyes as being in His dear Son all fair and lovely—a pleasing prospect for Him to look upon. He has gazed upon you, beloved, but never with anger, looked upon you when your infirmities, no, your willful wickedness had made you hate yourself, and yet, though He has seen you in this doleful state, He had such a regard for your relationship to Christ that you have still been accepted in the beloved.

I wish it were in the power of mortal speech to convey the full glory of that thought, but it is not. You must eat this morsel alone; you must take it like a wafer made with honey and put it under your tongue, and suck the essential sweetness out of it. The eyes of God, *my* God, are always upon His chosen, as eyes of affection, delight, complacency, unwearied power, immutable wisdom, and unchanging love.

The next word that seems to flash and sparkle in the text is that word "ALWAYS." "The eyes of the Lord are *always* upon it." And it is added, as if that word were not enough for such dull ears as ours, "from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year." This is so plain and pointed that we may not imagine that any one single day or hour of the day, or minute of the hour we are removed from the eyes or the heart of God. I tried to discover the other day what time there was in one's life when one could best afford to be without God. Perhaps imagination suggests the time of prosperity, when business prospers, wealth is growing, and the mind is happy. Ah, beloved, to be without our God then, why it would be like the marriage feast without the bridegroom, it would be the day of delight and no delight, a sea and no water in it, day and no light. What? All these mercies and no God? Then there is only so much shell and no kernel, so much shadow and no substance. In the midst of such joys as earth can give in the absence of the Lord the soul can hear satanic laughter, for Satan laughs at the soul because it has tried to make the

world its rest, and is sure to be deceived. Do without God in prosperity, beloved? We cannot, for then we should grow worldly, proud, careless, and deep damnation would be our lot. The Christian in prosperity is like a man standing on a pinnacle, he must then be divinely upheld or his fall will be terrible. If you can do without God at all, it certainly is not when you are standing on the pinnacle. What then? Could we do without Him in adversity? Ask the heart that is breaking! Ask the tortured spirit that has been deserted by its friend! Ask the child of poverty who has not where to lay his head! Ask the daughter of sickness, tossing by night and day on that uneasy bed, "Could you do without your God?" And the very thought causes wailing and gnashing of teeth. *With* God pain becomes pleasure, and dying beds are elevated into thrones, but *without* God—ah, what could we do? Well then, is there no period? Cannot the young Christian, full of freshness and vigor, elated with the novelty of piety, do without his God? Ah, poor puny thing, how can the lamb do without the shepherd to carry it in his arms? Cannot the man in middle life then, whose virtues have been confirmed, do without his God? He tells you that it is the day of battle with him, and that the darts fly so thick in business nowadays, that the burdens of life are so heavy in this age that without God a man in middle life is like a naked man in the midst of a thicket of briars and thorns—he cannot hope to make his way.

Ask yon gray beard with all the experience of 70 years, whether at least he has not attained to an independence of divine grace, and he will say to you that as the weakness and infirmity of the body press upon him it is his joy that his inner man is renewed day by day, but take away God, who is the spring of that renewal, and old age would be utter wretchedness. Ah, brothers and sisters, there is not a moment in any one day that you or I have ever lived, that we could have afforded to dispense with the help of God, for when we have thought ourselves strong, as, alas, we have been fools enough to think so, in five minutes we have done that which has cost us rivers of tears to undo; in an unguarded moment we have spoken a word which we could not recall, but which we would have recalled if we should have had to bite our tongues in halves to have had it unsaid. We have thought a thought when God has left us which has gone whizzing through our souls like a hellish thunderbolt making a fiery path along the spirit; we may well wonder how it is that the evil thought did not become a terrible act as it would have done if God whom we had forgotten had forgotten us. We need to set the Lord always before us. Let us then, when we wake in the morning, take this promise with us and say, Lord, You have said You will always be with us; then leave us not till the dews of evening fall, and we return to our couch; leave us not even when we are there, lest in the night temptation should be whispered in our ears and we should wake to defile our mind with unholiness. Leave us never, O our God, but always be our very present help! Last year was, perhaps, the gloomiest of our lives. All the newspaper summaries of 1866 are like the prophetic roll which was writ-

ten within and without with lamentations. The year has gone, and everybody is glad to think that we have entered upon a new one; yet, who knows but what 1867 may be worse? Who can tell? Well, brothers and sisters let it be what God chooses it shall be. Let it be what He appoints; for there is this comfort in the assurance that not a moment from this Sunday night on to December 31st , 1867, shall be without the tender care of heaven; not even for a second will the Lord remove His eyes from any of His people. Here is good cheer for us! We will march boldly into this wilderness, for the pillar of fire and cloud will never leave us; the manna will never cease to drop, and the rock that followed us will never cease to flow with living streams. Onward, onward, let us go, joyously confident in our God.

The next word that springs from the text is that great word JEHOVAH. It is a pity that our translators did not give us the names of God as they found them in the original. The word LORD in capitals is well enough, but that grand and glorious name of "Jehovah" should have been retained. In this case we read, "The eyes of Jehovah are always upon it." He who surveys us with love and care is none other than the one and indivisible God, so that we may conclude if we have His eyes to view us we have His heart to love us, and if we have His heart we have His wings to cover us, we have His hands to bear us up; we have the everlasting arms to be underneath us, we have all the attributes of Deity at our command. Oh, Christian, when God says that He always looks at you, He means this, that He is always yours; there is nothing which is necessary for you which He will refuse to do; there is no wisdom stored up in Him which He will not use for you, there is no one attribute of all that great mass of splendor which makes up the Deity which shall be withheld from you in any measure, but all that God is shall be yours. He shall be your God forever and ever. He will give you grace and glory, and be your guide even unto death.

Perhaps the sweetest word of the text is that next one—the eyes of Jehovah "YOUR GOD." Ah, there is a blessed secret! Why? Ours in covenant; our God, for He chose us to be *His* portion; and by His grace He has made us choose Him to be *our* portion. We are His and He is ours—

"So I my best Beloved's am,
So He is mine."

"Your God." Blessed be the Lord, we have learned to view Him not as another man's God but as our God. Christian, can you claim God this day? Has your hand by faith grasped Him? Has your heart by love twisted its tendrils round Him? Do you feel Him to be the greatest possession that you have, that all creatures are but a dream, an empty show, but that God is your substantial treasure; your all in all? Oh then it is not an absolute God whose eyes are upon you, but God in covenant relationship regards you. "Your God." What a word is this! He who is watching me is my Shepherd; He who cares for me is my Father; not my God alone by way of power, but my Father by way of relationship; One who though He

is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, yet deigned to visit this poor earth robed in mortal flesh that He might become like we are, and He is now our God, the God of His people by near and dear relationship. In ties of blood Jesus is one with sinners, our husband, our head, our all in all, and we are His fullness, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Thus the eyes of God, as the covenant God of Israel, are upon His people from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

I must now leave the text to talk to you alone by itself. Much more may be said, but better unsaid by me, if you let the text say it to you. Talk to the text, I pray you, let it journey with you till you can say of it as the disciples said of Christ, "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way?"

II. We are now to TURN THE TEXT OVER; that is to say, we will misread it, yet read it rightly. Suppose the text were to run thus—"The eyes of the Lord's people are always upon Him from the beginning of the year to the end of the year"? Dear friends, we like the text as it stands, but I do not believe we shall ever understand the fullness of it unless we receive it as I have now altered it, for we only understand God's sight of us when we get a sight of Him. God, unknown to us, is our protector, but He is not such a protector that we can comfortably repose upon Him. We must discern Him by the eyes of faith, or else the mercy, though given by God, is not spiritually enjoyed in our hearts. Beloved, if God looks at us, how much more ought we to look at Him? When God sees us what does He see? Nothing—I was going to say—nothing, if He looks at us in ourselves, but that which is unworthy to be looked at. Now, on the contrary, when we look at Him what do *we* see? Oh such a sight, that I wonder not that Moses said, "I beseech You, show me Your glory." What a vision will it be! Will it not be heaven's own vision to see God? Is not it the peculiar prerogative of the pure in heart that they shall see God? And yet, I cannot understand it, some of us have had the right to see God for years, and we have occasionally seen Him face to face, as a man speaks to his friend; by faith we have seen God, but, beloved, what I cannot understand is that we see so little of Him. Do you ever find yourself living all day without God? Not perhaps absolutely so, for you would not like to go to business without a little prayer in the morning; but do you not sometimes get through that morning's prayer without seeing God at all? I mean, is it not just the form of kneeling down, and saying good words and getting up again? And all through the day, have you not lived away from God? This is a strange world to live in, there are not many things to make one happy, and yet somehow we forget the very things that could give us happiness, and keep our eyes upon the frivolous cares and teasing troubles which distract us. So we even close the night—no taste of His love, no kiss of His lips that is better than wine; and our evening prayer—poor moaning it is, hardly a prayer.

I fear it is possible to live not only days but months at this dying rate, and it is horrible living, such horrible living that I would infinitely prefer

to be locked up in the moldiest dungeon in which a man of God ever rotted and have the Lord's presence, than I would care to live in the noblest palace in which a sinner ever sported himself without God. After all, that which makes life life is the enjoyment of the presence of God. It is not so with the worldling—he can live without God, like the swine, who, being contented with their husks, lie down and sleep and wake again to feed; but the Christian cannot live on husks, he has a stomach above them, and if he does not get his God he will be miserable. God has ordained it so that a spiritual man is wretched without the love of God in his heart. If you and I want present happiness without God, we had better be outright sinners and live upon this world than try to be happy in religion without communion with Jesus. Present happiness for a genuine Christian in the absence of Christ is an absolute impossibility. We must have God or we are, of all men, most miserable. Suppose that in this year 1867 we were at any rate filled with the desire to have our eyes always upon God from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, to be always conscious that He sees us, to be always sensible of His presence—more than that, to be always longing to be obedient to His commands, always desiring to win souls for His dear Son from the beginning of the year to the end of the year; what a happy thing this would be! If we could abide in a spirit of prayerfulness or thankfulness, devout, consecrated, loving, tender, it would be a high thing to attain unto. Brothers and sisters, we believe in a great God who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think, why not expect great things from Him? I think of this blessing, and I dare to ask for it; surely then He is able to give it. Do not let us stand back because of unbelief; let us ask that as God's eyes will be upon us, our eyes may be upon Him. What a blessed meeting of eyes when the Lord looks us full in the face, and we look at Him through the Mediator Christ Jesus, and the Lord declares, "I love you," and we answer, "We also love You, O our God!" Oh that we may be in harmony with the Lord our God, and find ourselves drawn upwards and bound to Him! May the Lord be the Sun, and we the dewdrops which sparkle in His rays and are exhaled and drawn aloft by the heat of His love! May God look down *from* heaven, and we look up *to* heaven, and both of us be happy in the sight of each other, delighting and rejoicing in mutual affection! This is what communion means. I have taken a long while to bring it to that one word, but that is what it means—

"Daily communion let me prove
With You, blest object of my love."

That was Toplady's desire, but I am afraid if I would express my own experience I must close with the other two of the verses where Toplady says—

"But oh, for this no strength have I,
My strength is at Your feet to lie."

III. In the third place, we will imagine that WE BLOT THE TEXT OUT ALTOGETHER. Not that we can blot it out or would do so if we could, but we are to suppose that it is blotted out to imagine that you and I have to

live all the year without the eyes of God upon us, not finding a moment from the beginning of the year to the end of the year in which we perceive the Lord to be caring for us or to be waiting to be gracious to us. Imagine that there is none to whom we may appeal beyond our own fellow creatures for help. Oh miserable supposition! We have come to the opening of the year, and we have to get through it somehow, we must stumble through January, go muddling through the winter, groaning through the spring, sweating through the summer, fainting through the autumn, and groveling on to another Christmas, and no God to help us; no prayer when God is gone, no promise when God is no more. There could be no promise, no spiritual succor, no comfort, no help for us if there were no God. I will suppose this to be the case with any one of us here. But I hear you cry out, "Imagine not such a thing, for I would be like an orphan child without a father, I would be helpless—a tree with no water to its roots." But I will suppose this is the case of you sinners. You know you have been living for 20, or 30, or 40 years without God, without prayer, without trust, without hope, yet I would not wonder that if I were solemnly to tell you that God would not let you pray during the next year, and would not help you if you did pray, I would not wonder if you were greatly startled at it. Though I believe that the Lord will hear you from the beginning of the year to the end of the year; though I believe that He will watch over you and bless you if you seek Him, yet I fear that the most of you are despising His care, living without fellowship with Him, and so you are without God, without Christ, without hope, and will be so from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

There is a story told of a most eccentric minister, that walking out one morning he saw a man going to work, and said to him, "What a lovely morning! How grateful we ought to be to God for all His mercies!" The man said he did not know much about it. "Why," said the minister, "I suppose you always pray to God for your wife and family—for your children—don't you?" "No," he said, "I do not know that I do." "What," said the minister, "do you never pray?" "No." "Then I will give you half-a-crown, if you will promise me you never will as long as ever you live." "Oh," he said, "I shall be very glad of half-a-crown to get me a drop of beer." He took the half-crown and promised never to pray as long as he lived. He went to his work, and when he had been digging for a little while, he thought to himself, "That's a strange thing I have done this morning—a very strange thing—I've taken money and promised never to pray as long as I live." He thought it over, and it made him feel wretched. He went home to his wife and told her of it. "Well, John," she said, "you may depend upon it it was the devil, you've sold yourself to the devil for half-a-crown." This so bowed the poor wretch down that he did not know what to do with himself. This was all he thought about—that he had sold himself to the devil for money, and would soon be carried off to hell. He commenced attending places of worship, conscious that it was of no use, for he had sold himself to the devil, but he was really ill, bodily ill,

through the fear and trembling which had come upon him. One night he recognized in the preacher the very man who had given him the half-crown, and probably the preacher recognized him, for the text was, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The preacher remarked that he knew a man who had sold his soul for half-a-crown. The poor man rushed forward and said, "Take it back! Take it back!" "You said you would never pray," said the minister, "if I gave you half-a-crown; do you now want to pray?" "Oh yes, I would give the world to be allowed to pray." That man was a great fool to sell his soul for half-a-crown, but some of you are a great deal bigger fools, *for you never had the half-crown,* and yet you still do not pray, and I dare say you never will, but will go down to hell never having sought God. Perhaps, if I could make this text negative, and say to you, "the eyes of God will *not* be upon you from the beginning of this year to the end of the year, and God will *not* hear and bless you," it might alarm and awaken you. But though I suggest the thought, I would rather you say, "Oh let not such a curse rest upon me, for I may die this year, and I may die this day. O God, hear me now!" Ah, dear hearer, if such a desire is in your heart the Lord will hear you and bless you with His salvation.

IV. Let us close with USING THE TEXT. The way to use it is this. If the eyes of the Lord will be upon us His people from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, what shall we do? Why, let us be as happy as we can during this year. You have your trials and troubles to come—do not expect that you will be free from them. The devil is not dead, and sparks still fly upward. Herein is your joy, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will never leave you nor forsake you. Up with your standard now and march on boldly! In the name of the Lord set up your banner, and begin to sing. Away with worrisome care, God cares for us; the sparrows are fed, and shall not the children be? The lilies bloom, and shall not the saints be clothed? Let us roll all our burdens upon the Burden-Bearer. You will have enough to care for if you care for His cause as you should. Do not spoil your power to care for God by caring for yourself. This year let your motto be, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." By anxious thought you cannot add an inch to your stature, nor turn one hair white or black; take, then, no anxious thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Lean upon your God, and remember His promise that as your day is so shall your strength be. "I would have you," says the apostle, "I would have you without carefulness." He does not mean, I would have you without economy, without prudence and without discretion, but he means he would have you without fretfulness, without distrustful care. I would have you be without care for yourself, because the Lord's eyes will be upon you.

Further, dear friends, I would have you use the text by the way of seeking greater blessings and richer mercies than you have ever enjoyed. Blessed be God for His merciful kindness towards this church; His lov-

ing-kindnesses have been very many; His favors new every morning and fresh every evening—but we need more. Let us not be content with a February blessing, though that is generally the month in which we have had our refreshing; let us seek to get a blessing today. I hope you will get it this afternoon in the Sunday school you workers there. And I hope you will have it in the senior classes from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Let there be no dullness, lethargy, and lukewarmness in the classes this afternoon. The brother who has to address the school will I hope speak to you with fervor and earnestness—there must be no coldness there. And I hope you who are preaching in the street, if it is possible in such weather, or going from house to house with tracts, or doing anything else, will have a blessing on this first Sunday of the year. But then shall we grow cold next Sunday? Not at all; it is from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Shall we endeavor to get up a little excitement, and have a revival for five or six weeks? No, blessed be God, we must have it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. While we have a spring which never grows dry, why should the pitcher ever be empty? Surely gratitude can find us fuel enough in the forests of memory to keep the fire of love always flaming. Why should we be weary when the glorious prize is worthy of our constant exertions, when the great crowd of witnesses hold us in full survey? May our Lord by His Spirit bring you and me to a high pitch of prayerfulness, and then let us continue in prayer from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. May God bring you and me to a high degree of generosity, and then may we be always giving from the beginning of the year to the end of the year every week, from the first to the last, always laying by in store as God has prospered us for His cause. May we be always active, always industrious, always hopeful, always spiritual, always heavenly, and always raised up and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So may our gracious God deal with us from the beginning of the year to the end of the year through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 91.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

CHEERING WORDS AND SOLEMN WARNINGS
NO. 729

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 13, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Say you to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him."
Isaiah 3:10, 11.

THERE are two classes mentioned here, the righteous and the wicked; and into these two orders the Book of God is accustomed to divide the whole population of the globe. It speaks but little of upper and lower classes; it says but little concerning the various ranks into which civil and political institutions have divided the race of man; but from its first page to its last it is taken up with this grand division, the righteous and the wicked. Very early in human history we find the "seed of the woman," and the "seed of the serpent," and we meet with Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother, because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. While the deluge destroys the ungodly, Noah floats in the ark in security as the representative of the righteous; and when the destroying angel kills the rebellious Egyptians, Israel feasts in safety upon the Passover. The two races have always been in existence and at enmity. Israel was oppressed in Egypt, attacked by Amalekites in the wilderness, beset by foes in Canaan, and carried away captive into Assyria or Babylon. In the nation of Israel itself the very heart of the people was depraved by an idolatrous seed, and at length eaten out by the hypocrisy of a generation of vipers who were of Israel, but were not the Lord's chosen. In our own age, when the church of God is found among the Gentiles, we see still the broad mark of distinction between men who fear the Lord and men who fear Him not. The line of nature and the line of divine grace run on the same as ever; the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent still contend with each other. And it is not the intent of God in His providence that the line of demarcation should be withdrawn. He would not have His people enter into alliance with the camp of evil, but "come out from among them and be separate." Nonconformity, in its spiritual sense, is the duty of every Christian. "Be not conformed to this world, but be you transformed by the renewing of your minds." The flood came upon the world when the sons of God were united with the daughters of men, and unholy alliances between the church and the world provoked God to the highest possible degree. He will have the distinction maintained between the precious and the vile till time shall be no more. God of old divided light from darkness; the light He called day, and the darkness He called Night; and He will not have us call light

darkness, nor darkness light. He forbade the Jews to sow with many seeds intermingled, or the wearing of linsey-woolsey, because He would typically forbid unhallowed blending. He will have a seed that shall serve Him and that shall fear Him, and go outside the camp bearing the reproach of His dear Son, and these shall be evermore distinct from that other seed under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air, whose rebellious inquiry is, "Who is Jehovah that we should obey His voice?"

A crimson line runs between the righteous and the wicked, the line of the atoning sacrifice; faith crosses that line, but nothing else can. Faith in the precious blood is the great distinction at the root, and all those divine graces which spring out of faith go to make the righteous more and more separate from the ungodly world, who, having not the root, have not the fruit. Do you believe on Jesus Christ? On whose side are you? Are you for us or for our enemies? Do you rally at the cry of the cross? Does the uplifted banner of a dying Savior's Love attract you? If not, then you remain still out of God, out of Christ, an alien to the commonwealth of Israel, and you will have your portion among the enemies of the Savior.

This distinction is so sharp and definite, that there are none who dwell in a borderland between the two conditions. There is a sharp line of division between the righteous and the wicked, as clear as that which divides death from life. A man cannot be between death and life; he is either living or dead. If there is but a spark of life he cannot be numbered with the dead; he lives, and he will, let us hope, live to a better purpose; but if he is dead, and the vital spark is quite quenched, you may dress him as you will and hang ornaments on his ears, and fill his mouth with the sweetest dainties, but you cannot breathe into his nostrils the breath of life again—he is dead. A clear line of demarcation exists between life and death, and such a division is fixed by God between the righteous and the wicked. There are no *betweenities;* no amphibious dwellers in divine grace and out of divine grace; no monstrous nondescripts who are neither sinners nor saints. You are, dear hearer, this day; alive by the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit, or else you are dead in trespasses and sins. He who is not with Christ is against Him, he who gathers not with Him scatters abroad; so that to every man, woman and child in this place, my text, with its double utterances, has a voice. If you are righteous, it shall be well with you; if you are not righteous, though you may think that you are not wicked, and may feel indignant that the term should be applied to you, yet it must be and my text means *you* when it says, "Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him."

There ought to be at the outset of our discourse this morning a great searching of heart, and each one should say to himself—

"And what am I?—My soul, awake,
And an impartial prospect take;
Does no dark sign, no ground of fear,
In practice, or in heart appear?
What image does my spirit bear?

Is Jesus form'd, and living there?
Say, do His lineaments divine
In thought, in word, and actions shine?"

Do not ask such questions, and then leave their answer in cloudland; rather wait at the mercy seat till you know for a certainty that Christ is yours and you are His. Dear hearer, if there is a comfortable word spoken this morning, do not apply it to yourself, if you are not among the righteous; if you are not made righteous through the blood of Christ, and through the transforming power of His Spirit, do not steal a dangerous consolation from the Word. On the other hand, if there is a dark and dreary threat, which in solemn truth applies to you, tremble at it, but let it come home with power; for it may be that God will visit you in the whirlwind or in the storm of the threat, making the clouds of the text to be the dust of His feet, and while He rebukes you, you shall find it to be in love. If the Lord shall break your heart, consent to have it broken, asking that He may sanctify that brokenness of spirit to bring you in earnest to the Savior, that you may yet be numbered with the righteous ones.

We shall now come, as God may help us, to the text.

I. THE WELL-BEING OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

Here let us read the words again, that we may get the fullness of their meaning. "Say you to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." Observe attentively *the fact mentioned,* the great fact—it shall be well with the righteous. The statement is singularly simple. There are few adverbs or adjectives to describe, and, therefore, to limit the announcement, the statement is made broadly. It is almost as grand, in its simplicity, as the saying, "Let there be light, and there was light." *"It shall be well with them,"* that is the whole of the declaration; but the very fewness of the words creates and reveals a depth of meaning.

Observe, then, we may gather from the fact that the text is without descriptive limits; that *it is well with the righteous* ALWAYS. If it had said, "Say you to the righteous, that it is well with them in their prosperity," we must have been thankful for so great a gift, for prosperity is an hour of peril; or if it had been written, "Say you to the righteous that it is well with them when under persecution," we must have been thankful for so sustaining an assurance, for persecution is hard to bear; but when no time is mentioned, all time is included; when no particular occasion is singled out, it is because upon every occasion the saying is alike true—

"Well when they see His face,
Or sink amidst the flood;
Well in affliction's thorny maze,
Or on the mount with God."

"Say you to the righteous, that it shall be well with them," from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, from the first gatherings of evening shadows until the daystar shines. It shall be well with them when, like Samuel, God calls them from the bed of their childhood; it shall be well with them when, like David in his old age, they are stayed up in the bed

to conclude their life with a song of praise; it shall be well with them if, like Solomon, they shall abound in wealth, and well with them if, like Lazarus, they shall lie upon a dunghill and the dogs shall lick their sores; it shall be well with them, if like Job they wash their feet with oil and their steps with butter, if the princes are before them bowing their heads, and the great ones of the earth do them obeisance; but it shall be equally well with them if, like Job in his trial, they sit down to scrape themselves with a potsherd, their children gone, their wives bidding them curse their God, their friends miserable comforters to them, and themselves left alone; it shall be well, always well.—

"'Tis well when joys arise,
'Tis well when sorrows flow,
'Tis well when darkness veils the skies,
And strong temptations blow."

The text evidently means that it is well with the righteous at all times alike, and never otherwise than well, because no time is mentioned, no season is excluded, and all time is intended—

"What cheering words are these!
Their sweetness who can tell?
In time, and to eternal days,
'Tis with the righteous well."

It shall be well with the righteous, especially, in *the future.* The text says, "it *shall* be well with them." They often dread the future, but they certainly have no reason for unbelieving fear. It *shall* be well with the righteous. They may look forward to a day of trouble which they clearly foresee, but they have no reason for foreboding, for it shall be well with them in the coming struggle; and if perhaps on the heels of that trouble there shall come another and yet another, it shall still be well with them, for is it not written, "In six troubles I will be with you, and in seven there shall no evil touch you"? If they shall extend their vision to those years of coming decline, when the dry leaves shall cover their path, when the grasshopper shall be a burden, and their teeth fail because they are few, and they who look out of the windows shall be darkened, it shall be well with them at eventide; their last days shall be their best days; they shall dwell in the land Beulah, and sing upon the bank of Jordan; for their souls shall be ravished with foretastes of the rest which remains for the favored ones. Should the man of God extend his view yet further, and through the telescope of faith should gaze upon unknown worlds, he may discern distinctly, by the light of gracious promises that it shall be well with him in the land of the hereafter. The text hints at no end, it does not say it shall be well with us up to a certain point, but beyond that the text says nothing; no, the words are simply and grandly, *"it shall be,"* and nothing less. God's "shalls" must be understood always in their largest sense, and so we know that when the cycles of time shall cease, and the wheels of this huge engine shall go to rack, it shall be well with the righteous. Let the nations be dashed in pieces, let there come terrific conflicts, let Armageddon's last dread shout be heard, let the Euphrates be dried up, let the sea be licked up with tongues of forked flame, let the very

mountains melt like wax in the presence of God, let the elements be consumed with fervent heat, it matters nothing to the Christian what shall happen in all those days of dread catastrophe, for has not God said it shall be well with the righteous?

Always well then, and well into the future. We add, *well upon divine authority.* A wise man may say to us, "It is well," and his experience may be so little at fault that the utterance may be accurate; we ourselves may sometimes come to a fairly safe conclusion that things are well with us; but oh, how much better it is to have it under the hand and seal of omniscience! He who searches the heart, who sees every secret thing, says that with the righteous it is well. It is the mouth of God who speaks the comforting assurance. Oh beloved, if God says that it is well, 10,000 devils may say it is ill, and we laugh them all to scorn. Blessed be God for a faith which enables us to believe God when the creatures contradict Him. It is, says God, at all times well with you, you righteous one; then, beloved, if you cannot see it, let God's Word stand in the place of your sight; yes, believe it on divine authority more confidently than if your eyes and your feelings told it to you. Whom God blesses is blest indeed, and what His lips pronounce is truth most sure and steadfast.

It is well; we may rest assured again, *with our best selves.* The text does not say it is always well with our bodies, but our bodies are not ourselves—they are but the casket of our nobler natures; our soul is the true jewel. Our bodies are but the garments; our soul is the precious life which wears them for a while. I understand the text to mean, our nobler parts, our new God-given life; it shall be well with it. If it is passed through the fire, it is but to refine it of its dross; if it is compelled to take a pilgrimage through the floods, it is that it may come up like a sheep from the washing. It is always well with our better and nobler natures; if God is but with us to sanctify us and sustain us, the worst of circumstances shall work for our good.

When I looked at the text, studying it as best I could, I thought, "Yes, and if God says it is well, He means *it is emphatically well."* It is well with weight. It is not a superficial statement that it is apparently well, but it is a deep, true, lasting, sincere *"well."* Conceive, if you can, of the soul's being well in the best sense in which it could be well. Now all that you have imagined and more is true of the righteous—"it shall be well." It shall be so well with the righteous man in the sight of God as to the grand matter that it could not be better. He shall be as pure, as happy, as ennobled as a man could possibly be when divine grace has fulfilled its purpose in him. God has already given the believer all that his heart can desire, for He has given him all things in Jesus, and He has insured to that man by oath and by covenant all that he can ever need in time and eternity. In the best, highest, largest, truest sense of the term, it is well with the righteous.

I want you to observe before I leave this fact, *that it is so well with them that God wants them to know it.* He would have His saints happy, and therefore He says to His prophets, "Say you to the righteous, it shall

be well with them." It is not wise sometimes to remind a man of his wealth, and rank, and prospects, for pride is so readily stirred up in us. If a brother is endowed with remarkable talents, he will generally find that out soon enough himself; it is dangerous, perhaps, to tell him so; but it is not dangerous to assure Christians that it is well with *them*, for otherwise the Lord would not command us to repeat the assurance in the ears of the godly. The Lord would have every preacher comfort His people; He would have the Book, the good old Book itself, speak plainly to them of the dignity of their relationships, of the security of their portion, of the comfort of their present estate, and the Glory of the world to come. "Say you to the righteous; it shall be well with them." Say it often and plainly, for the statement will be beneficial. I desired to have said this upon the present occasion in such a way that you could see it and feel it, and rejoice in it. Are you in Christ, my brother, my sister? Have you come to the fountain of His precious blood? Have you washed there? Have you trusted in Jesus? Now it may seem to you that everything goes amiss with you, and the more you try to set matters right, the worse they become; but God has said to His servant, this morning, "Say you to the righteous, it shall be well with them," and I do say it, yet not I, but God says it, it shall be well with you, it is well with you. Oh that you would believe it! Ah, if you did believe it you would be so joyful. Well, and should not the righteous be joyful? Ought they not to exceedingly rejoice? The thought has been crossing my mind many times this week that I am not joyful enough, and that God's people, as a whole, are not joyful enough. Am I mistaken in that idea? What is the truest worship in the world? Why, it is joy in the Lord! "Rejoice in the Lord always." I believe that we adore God best and please Him most when the thought of Him does bring to our soul exalted pleasure. But alas, we give our God little of the sweet odors of our delight; we get to muddling our brains about our worldly estate, our sins, our conflicts, and inward corruptions, and we forget what a good God we have, and His loving-kindness is disregarded. What a blessed God is ours in Christ Jesus! A sea of never-failing delights, a river of boundless joys, forever flowing on; blessed be the name of the Lord forever and ever! Let our hearts exult at the thought of His goodness, and leap for joy at the sound of His name. God Himself is our exceeding joy, and then to help us in all our holy exultation He cheers us with these heavenly words, "It is well with you, My dear Child; it is well with you now, and shall be throughout eternity."

A few minutes will scarcely suffice in full length to *account for this truth of God.* As I have but so short a time, will you accompany me with earnest attention while I give a bare outline and hasty list of the causes of the Christian's joy; to do more than this it were vain to attempt. It is no wonder that it is well with the believer when you consider that *his greatest trouble is past.* His greatest trouble was the guilt of sin. This threw him into the dungeon, where there was no water; from which he has now escaped, for sin is pardoned, and the repenting sinner is set free from the terrible bondage of the law. He mourns over sin, but he knows

that the guilt of it was endured and taken away by the great Substitute, and he rejoices that he now stands an absolved person, against whom the justice of God can bring no account, for he is completely forgiven. Do you not remember the time when you thought that if God would but forgive you your sins, you would not make another stipulation; if He would command you to be a galley slave, yet if sin were pardoned, you felt you could tug the oar and bear the smart of the driver's whip right cheerfully, as long as the legal whip was taken away. Now, Christian, your sin is pardoned, that which separated you from God is gone; your iniquity is forgiven through Jesus Christ, and none can lay anything to your charge.

Then *your next greatest trouble is doomed.* Your second greatest trouble is indwelling sin. The power of sin plagues you now. Well, that is doomed. Christ by His death has driven the spear through the heart of sin as to its power over you; it shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace. The day is hastening on when you shall drop all tendencies to sin. Oh, blissful hour! Oh, joyous change, when the tendency shall be all upward, all toward good, all toward God, and not one whisper of temptation toward evil; not one carnal passion, not a thought of crime, not one unsubdued desire, but the whole soul through and through washed and cleansed and made like unto God. The holiness, without which no man can see the Lord, is guaranteed to every believer in the covenant, and so his second greatest mischief is moved away by the blessing of his God. This ought to make him a happy man, if neither the guilt nor the power of sin can curse him he ought to rejoice.

With regard to the Christian, he knows that *his best things are safe.* If the ship is wrecked, yet he never had his treasure on board this earthly vessel; if the thief should break through and steal, yet the thief cannot get at his jewels, for his jewels are hidden with Christ in God; if the moth should corrupt and fret his garments, yet his everlasting robe will never be moth-eaten, for that hangs up in the great house above ready for him that he may put it on after he has undressed himself and left his week-day garments in the tomb. His best things are all secure; time cannot change them, nor death destroy them, or Satan rob him of them. As for *his worst things they only work his good.* He has his worst things as other men, for he cannot always feast, but his worst things are among his mercies. He gains by his losses, he acquires health by his sicknesses, he wins friends through his bereavements, and he absolutely becomes a conqueror through his defeats. Nothing therefore can be injurious to the Christian when the very worst things that he has are but rough waves to wash his golden ships home to port and enrich him. My dear friends, I was about to say of the Christian that it is so well with him that I could not imagine it to be better, for he is *well fed,* he feeds upon the flesh and blood of Jesus; he is *well clothed*—"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him"—he wears the imputed righteousness of Christ; he is *well housed,* he dwells in God who has been the dwelling place of His people in all generations; he is *well married,* for his soul is knit in bonds of mar-

riage union to Christ; He is *well provided for* for the present, the Lord is his Shepherd, and he will not want; and he is well provided for the future—

"This world is his and worlds to come;
Earth is his lodge, and heaven his home."

Time would fail me to say that it must be well with the Christian, because *God has put within him many graces, which help to make all things well.* Has he difficulties? Faith laughs at them, and overcomes them. Has he trials? Love accepts them, seeing the Father's hand in them all. Has he sicknesses? Patience kisses the rod. Is he weary? Hope expects a rest to come. The sparkling graces which God has put within the man's soul qualify him to overcome in all conflicts, and to make this world subject to his power in every battle; I mean that he gets good out of the worst ill, or throws that ill aside by the majesty of the life that is in him.

Then mark how the Christian has, beside what is put within him by the Holy Spirit, this to comfort him; namely, *that day by day God the Holy Spirit visits him with fresh Life and fresh power*. If our eternal life depended upon what we have within, apart from fresh spiritual help, we might find it to be far other than well with us; but the perennial fountains which winters' frosts cannot freeze, and which the burning heats of summer can never dry, flow perpetually to us. We draw living waters from the depth that lies under the eternal fountain which couches beneath is ours. The everlasting fullness of God, which is treasured up in the person of Christ, is given over by an Immutable covenant to be the provision for the faithful; fortifications of stupendous rocks are our secure dwelling places, and the inexhaustible fullness of God in Christ Jesus is our never-failing supply.

Briefly let me run over a few things which the Christian has, from each of which it may be inferred it must be well with him. He has a bank that never breaks, the glorious *throne of grace;* and he has only to apply on bended knee to get what he will. Over the door there is written, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." He has always near him a most sweet companion, whose loving converse is so delightful that the roughest roads grow smooth, and the darkest nights glow with brightness. The coldest and most shivering days become warm when that companion talks. "Did not our hearts burn within us while He spoke with us by the way?"—

"Though enwrapt in gloomy night,
We perceive no ray of light;
Since the Lord Himself is here,
'Tis not meet that we should fear.
Night with Him is never night,
Where He is, there all is light;
When He calls us, why delay?
They are happy who obey."

The believer has *an arm to lean upon* also, an arm that is never weary, never feeble, never never withdrawn; so that if he has to climb along a rugged way, the more rough the road the more heavily he leans, and the more graciously he is sustained. Moreover, he is favored with *a perpetual*

Comforter—not an angel to whisper of heaven, but God Himself, the blessed Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, to pour in oil and wine into every wound, and to bring to his remembrance the things which Christ has spoken. Why, sirs, if there were anything that the Christian needed which were not supplied to him, I might admit that it must sometimes be ill with him; but when I read, "All things are yours, whether things present or things to come; or life or death, all are yours; and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's," truly I conclude that it is and must be well with the righteous.

It is well with the righteous when he comes to die. Here we speak what we know, and testify what we have seen. The dying songs of saints are often in our ears. During nearly all the term of my ministry in London I have had the privilege of knowing a dear friend in Christ Jesus to whom my heart has been greatly knit; one of the noblest and happiest of the sons of men. Yet it was not bodily vigor which made him so uniformly joyous, for as long as I have known him he has been of a very weakly constitution; so that as often as the wintry months came on he has had to wend his way to Egypt, Madeira, or South America, there to pass through the winter in banishment, and return to his ministry as soon as the season allowed. A loving heart and a large mind were blended in him; he was always making friends, and I should say never lost one; he was deeply interested in the work here, and was much at home in the midst of this great assembly, for our songs and praises, which he compared to the noise of many waters, were sweet to his ears. Now, it pleased the Lord but a day or two ago that he should fall asleep; much to my loss, but to his own eternal gain. He thought that perhaps he could labor through this winter, and his soul was warmed by holy zeal to stay with his people if he could, and preach the gospel which he loved so well. That zeal has cost his life. He wrote me one or two sweet letters on his dying bed, and when at last he closed his eyes, he uttered for his last testimony, words so like my own John Anderson, that I am sure nobody could have invented them; his last words were *"All right! Farewell."* Yes, that is how a Christian can live, and how he can die. "It is all right," he said; "it is well with me. It is right here—I have done my work, and God accepts it; it is right up there—Christ has finished His work on my account; and now farewell, till we meet again." No tinge of sadness—no, not a whisper of grief; it is ALL, all, all right. He had served his Master long, and was glad to rest. He had fought his battle, and as the warrior sheathed his sword his eye caught the flashes of his Master's welcome, and he said to his comrades, "All right! Farewell!" He is with God, and we are following on. All right is it now, and all right it shall *be* with us also if we are depending upon the finished work of the Well-Beloved.

Lastly; *it is well with the righteous after death.* His disembodied spirit is in Jesus' bosom. Is it not well? When the trumpet sounds, his spirit comes down to meet the risen body; to behold the glorious Advent of the once despised Son of David, to reign with Him in His reign, and triumph in His triumph, and then to be caught up to sit upon His throne, and

dwell with Him where the glorified church is, world without end. "Say you to the righteous; it shall be well with them."

We have only a word or two left concerning *the ground* upon which it is well with the righteous. The text says that "they shall eat the fruit of their doings." Dear friends that is the *only* term upon which the Old covenant can promise that it shall be well with us; but this is not the ground upon which you and I stand under the gospel dispensation. Absolutely to eat the fruit of all our doings would be even to us, if judgment were brought to the line and righteousness to the plummet, a very dreadful thing. Yet there is a limited sense in which the righteous man will do this. "I was hungry, and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink," is good gospel language; and when the Master shall say, "Inasmuch as you did this unto one of the least of these My people, you did it unto Me," the reward will not be of debt, but still it will be a reward, and the righteous will eat the fruit of his doings. I prefer, however, to remark that there is One whose doings for us are the grounds of our dependence, and, blessed be God, we shall eat the fruit of His doings. He, the Lord Jesus, stood for us, and you know what a harvest of joy He sowed for us in His life and death. That living holiness, that dying obedience, has purchased for us unnumbered blessings; His the smart, but ours the sweet; His the sweet, but ours the rest. As we sit down at heaven's feasts, the food which we shall there eat will be the fruit of *His* doings, the joy we shall there receive will be the result of *His* griefs, and the "well done" will be, in its real merit, the reward of His righteousness. It shall be well with us, for we shall eat the fruits of our faith through the righteousness of Christ, the fruits of our love through His love to us, being with Him forever, and beholding His glory. Time forbids a further enlargement; I have set you down in a garden of nuts, among groves of pomegranates; pluck and eat as you will, for all things are yours if you are numbered with the righteous.

II. The second part of the text can only occupy a minute or two. It reveals THE MISERY OF THE WICKED. "Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him." I need not be long, because you have only to apply the negative to all that I have already said about the righteous. Observe this—it is ill with the wicked, *always* ill with him. There is no time mentioned, all time is therefore meant. It is always ill with him, whether he is by prosperity made fat for the slaughter, or is made in adversity to feel the first drops of the eternal shower of divine justice. It is ill with the wicked *on divine authority.* God says that it is ill—it must be very ill then. It will be ill with him in the *future;* it *shall* be ill with him. Worse and worse will his portion be till the worst thing of all shall come upon him. Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there are none to deliver you! It is ill with their best nature. If their body is healthy, their soul is sick. If their feet dance, yet their souls are condemned. If their mouths can sing their wanton songs, yet the wrath of God abides upon their spirits. It is ill with them in the weightiest sense. Our words are only ounce words, God's words

fall like avalanches. It is ill with you, O unconverted man, and unregenerate woman! It is ill in the most tremendous sense! It is ill, and you ought to know it, for God has told us to say it to you—"Woe unto the wicked—woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him." Oh that you felt this, for then you might escape from its future terror! If you did but know this mischief, the dread of it might drive you to the Savior, and His heart is open, the gates of mercy are not shut; He is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him.

But *why is it* ill with the wicked? It *must* be ill with him; he is out of joint with the entire world. Though ordinary creatures are obedient to God, this man has set himself in opposition to the whole current of creation. The man has an enemy who is omnipotent, whose power cannot be resisted; an enemy who is all goodness, and yet this man opposes Him. How can it be well with the stubble that fights with the flame, or with the wax that strives with the fire? An insect fighting with a giant, how will it overcome? And you, poor nothingness, contending with the everlasting God, how can it be anything but ill with you? It is ill with you, sinner, because your joys all hang upon a thread. Let life's thread be cut and where are your merriments? Your dainty music, and your costly cups, the mirth that flashes from your wanton eyes, and the jollity of your thoughtless soul—where will this be when death, with bony hands, shall come and touch your heart and make it cease its beating? It is ill with you because when these joys are over you have no more to come. You have one bright chapter in the story, but ah, the never-ending chapter, it is woe, woe, woe from beginning to the end; the woe of death, and after death the judgment, and after judgment the woe of condemnation, and then that woe that rolls onward forever, eternal woe, never coming to a pause, never knowing an alleviation. God help you, sinner, God help you to escape from this ill of yours! It is ill with you now. You have no mercy seat to go to to pour out your troubles before God. You have no Father in heaven to help you in the sorrows of this mortal life. You have no Son of Man to tread the furnace with you when your afflictions are heated seven times hotter. You have no Comforter to bring home to you the promises; you have no promises that can be brought home to you. You have no faith to sustain you; you have no love to Christ to cheer you; you have no patience to support you; you have no hope of another and better world to make your eyes glad. You miserable wretch, where are you? If you ride in your chariot yet I will not envy you—I will prefer to be like ragged Lazarus rather than be as you are; and if you are in poverty, yet hope not to escape, you are wretched in your present poverty; but what will eternal poverty be, when you are driven from the presence of God without hope to pine in vain for a drop of water to cool your parched tongue!

It shall be ill with the wicked, and let no present appearance lead you to doubt it. You are like a field that is not plowed, overgrown with weeds, and you laugh at the field that has been tormented with the plow; but wait, O prosperous sinner! Your time will come; when the weeds have gathered thick and foul there will be a burning, for the great Husband-

man will not forever endure the thorns and the thistles; and then you will wish that you too, like the tried Christian, had known the plow of spiritual trouble and felt repentance for sin. The eyes that never weep for sin here will weep in awful anguish forever. It will do you good to taste a little of the brine of your tears here, or else you will have to drink them forever and forever in eternity. It will be a profitable thing for you to feel the wrath of God heavy on your spirit now, for if not, it will crush you—crush you down and down without hope, world without end. It shall be ill with you. I will not stop to picture your dying bed. I know one, not far removed from me by relationship, who when he died had no bright hopes to gild the gloomy hour, but could only say in his last moments, "It is all dark! It is all dark!" And as he pointed to the fire grate that was without a fire he said, "It is dark like that black fireplace. I cannot see so much as a single spark of hope. Dark, all dark!" And so will it be with you, no, worse than that, it may be ghastly with the furnace blaze of divine wrath. And as to the infinite future, I will not stop to speak of it. Forever! Forever! Forever! It shall be ill with the wicked. Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come.—

"There is a death whose pang
Outlasts the fleeting breath;
Oh, what eternal horrors hang
Around 'the second death!'
Lord God of truth and grace,
Teach us that death to shun;
Lest we are banish'd from Your face,
And evermore undone."

God help you to flee from His dreadful anger, while flee you may; and may all of us be found among the righteous with whom it is forever well. If so it be, unto God shall be all the praise, while immortality shall last and heaven's high throne endures.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED
NO. 730

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING JANUARY 20, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me." John 14:1.

THE disciples had been like lambs carried in the warm bosom of a loving Shepherd. They were now about to be left by Him, and would hear the howling of the wolves, and endure the terrors of the snowstorm. They had been like tender plants conserved in a hothouse, a warm and genial atmosphere had always surrounded them; they were now to endure the wintry world with its nipping frosts, and so it was to be proven whether or not they had an inward vitality which could exist when outward protections were withdrawn. Their Master, their Head, was to be taken from them; well might they cry with Elisha, "My Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" We too, dear friends, though we have not enjoyed perhaps so entire an immunity as did the apostles, were at one time very graciously shielded from trouble; we had a summertime of joy and an autumn of peace, far different than this present winter of our discontent. It frequently happens that after conversion God, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, gives to the weaklings of the flock a period of repose during which they rejoice with David, "He makes me to lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside the still waters." But for all of us there will come a time of trouble similar to that sorrowful occasion which led the Savior to utter these memorable heart-cheering words. If our conscious communion with Jesus should not be interrupted, yet some other form of tribulation awaits us, for the testimony of earth's poet, that "man is made to mourn," is well borne out by the inspired declaration, "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards."

We must not expect that we shall be exceptions to the general lot of our race; there is no discharge in this war, we must all be conscripts in the armies of grief. We too shall do battle with strong temptations, and feel the wounds of adversity. Albeit that yonder ship so lately launched upon a glassy sea has all her streamers flying, and rejoices in a favorable wind, let her captain remember that the sea is treacherous, that winds are variable, and that the stoutest vessel may find it more than difficult to outride a hurricane. I rejoice to see the courage of that young man who has but just joined the army of the church militant, and is buckling on the glittering armor of faith; as yet there are no dents and bruises on that fair helmet and burnished breastplate, but let the wearer reckon upon blows, and bruises, and bloodstains; no, let him rejoice if he endures hardness as a good soldier, for without the fight where would be the victory? Brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus, without due trial, where would be our experience, and without the experience, where would be the holy increase of our faith, and the joyful triumph of our love through the manifested power of Christ? We must expect, then, to walk with our Lord to the gates of Gethsemane, both His and ours; we must

expect to cross the Brook Kidron in company with our Master, and it will be well if we hear Him say to us as He did to His disciples on that eventful night, "Let not your hearts be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me."

My brothers and sisters, some of us live at this hour in the midst of trouble. We do not remember any period more dark with portents of evil than the present watch of earth's long night. Few events have occurred of late to cheer the general gloom. Our hopeful spirit has been accustomed to say, all things considered, there are no times like the times present. Think about whether any times have been more vexatious and troublesome than those which just now are passing over our head. The political atmosphere is far from being clear, no, it is thick and heavy with feelings of mutual distrust, which bring no increase to England's greatness, but greatly the reverse. There are those who think that our trade, especially in its more speculative department, has become thoroughly rotten; and one thing is quite certain, that many well-known infamous transactions have sapped the foundations of credit, and stained our national honor. Is all England bankrupt, and our wealth a sham? Let us hope not. But who can see without alarm the great portion of our trade which is going from us through the folly of the many who combine to regulate what ought to be left perfectly free? If our trade continues much longer to depart from us, we shall become a generation of beggars, who will deserve no pity because we brought our poverty upon ourselves. There are, we fear, dark days coming upon this land; in fact, the dark days are here; for in no year of the last 20 has there been, brothers and sisters, such deep and wide-spread distress in London as at the present moment. I am far from endorsing all the fears of the timid, yet I do see much ground for pleading earnestly with God to send to our rulers political wisdom to end the bitter disputes of class with class, and to grant to our whole nation divine grace to repent of its many sins, that the chastening rod may be withdrawn.

Apart from these, we have each a share of home-trials. Is there one here who is happy enough to wholly escape from the troubles of the hearth? Some have the wolf at the door, shortness of bread just now is felt in the houses of many a Christian; some of you are compelled to eat your bread with carefulness, and go to your God in the morning and ask Him to provide for you your daily food, and repeat that prayer with more meaning than usual, for just now God is making us feel that He can break the staff of bread and send a famine in the land if He so wills it. Many who are not altogether poor are, nevertheless, in sorrow, for reverses in business have, during the last few months, brought the affairs of many of the Lord's people into a very perilous state, so that they cannot but be troubled in spirit. Vexations abound and many a path is strewn with thorns. If this is not the shape of our trouble, sickness may be raging where penury has not entered. Beyond all these there may be afflictions which it were not well to mention—griefs which must be carried by the mother alone, trials which the father alone must bear, or sorrows in which none but the daughter can share. We all have our omer full of trials, day by day this bitter manna falls around the camp.

Trials arising among the church of God are many, and we might add, that to the genuine Christian they are as heavy as any which he has to

bear. I am sure, to those of us who have to look upon the church with the anxious eye of loving shepherds, to those of us who are set by God for the guidance and rule of His people, there are troubles enough, and more than enough, to bow us to the earth. In the best-ordered church, such as this is and long has been, it just is that offenses come. Sometimes it is a jealousy between brothers; at another time a strife between sisters; sometimes it is this one who has fallen into gross sin (God forgive these, who have pierced us through with many sorrows!) and another time it is a gradual backsliding which the pastor can detect, but which the subject of it cannot discern. Sometimes it is a heresy, which, springing up, troubles us; at another time it is a slander, which, like a deadly serpent, creeps through the grass. I have had little enough to complain of in these respects, but still such things are with us, even with us, and we must not count them strange, as though some strange thing had happened to us. While men are imperfect there will be sins among the best of them, which will cause sorrow both to themselves and to those of the Lord's people who are in fellowship with them.

Worst of all are soul troubles. God save you from these. Oh the grief of being conscious of having fallen from high places of enjoyment, conscious of having wasted opportunities for eminent usefulness, conscious of having been lax in prayer, of having been negligent in study, of having been—alas, that we should have to add it—unguarded in word and act! Ah, friends, when the soul feels all this, and cannot get to the blood of sprinkling as it should, cannot return to the Light of God's countenance as it would desire, it is trouble indeed! It is terrible to be compelled to sit and sing—

"Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?"

But my tale is all too long. It is clear that this mortal life has troubles enough. Suppose that these should meet, and that the man as a patriot is oppressed with the ills of his country, as a father and a husband is depressed with the cares of home, as a Christian afflicted with the troubles in the church, and as a saint made to walk heavily before the Lord because of inward afflictions—"why then he is in a sorry plight," you say. Indeed he is; but, blessed be God, he is in a plight in which the words of the text are still applicable to him. "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me."

Ceasing from this dolorous prelude, let us observe, that *the advice of the text is very timely and wise;* secondly, let us notice that *the advice of the text is practicable;* it is not given us to mock us, we must seek to carry it out; and lastly, and perhaps that last may yield us good cheer, *the advice of the text is very precious.*

I. FIRST, THEN, THE ADVICE OF THE TEXT IS VERY TIMELY AND WISE. There is no need to say, "Let not your heart be troubled," when you are not in affliction. When all things go well with you, you will need another caution— "Let not your heart be exalted above measure: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them." The word, "Let not your heart be troubled," is timely, and it is wise; a few minutes thought will lead you to see it. It is the easiest thing in the world, in times of difficulty, to let the heart be troubled; it is very natural for us to give up and drift with

the stream, to feel that it is of no use "taking arms against" such "a sea of trouble," but that it is better to lie passive and to say, "If one must be ruined, so let it be." Despairing idleness is easy enough, especially to evil, rebellious spirits, who are willing enough to get into further mischief that they may have more with which to blame God, against whose providence they have quarreled. Our Lord will not have us be so rebellious. He bids us pluck up heart and be of good courage in the worst possible condition, and here is the wisdom of His advice, namely, that *a troubled heart will not help us in our difficulties or out of them.* It has never been perceived in time of drought that lamentations have brought showers of rain, or that in seasons of frost, doubts, fears, and discouragements, have produced a thaw. We have never heard of a man whose business was declining, who managed to multiply the number of his customers by unbelief in God. I do not remember reading of a person whose wife or child was sick, who discovered any miraculous healing power in rebellion against the Most High. It is a dark night, but the darkness of your heart will not light a candle for you. It is a terrible tempest, but to quench the fires of comfort and open the doors to admit the howling winds into the chambers of your spirit will not stay the storm. No good comes out of fretful, petulant, unbelieving heart-trouble. This lion yields no honey. If it would help you, you might reasonably sit down and weep till the tears had washed away your woe. If it were really to some practical benefit to be suspicious of God and distrustful of providence, why then you might have a shadow of excuse; but as this is a mine out of which no one ever dug any silver, as this is a fishery out of which the diver never brought up a pearl, we would say, "Renounce that which cannot be of service to you; for as it can do no good, it is certain that it does much mischief."

A *doubting, fretful spirit takes from us the joys we have.* You have not all you could wish, but you still have more than you deserve. Your circumstances are not what they might be, but still they are not even now as bad as the circumstances of some others. Your unbelief makes you forget that health still remains for you if poverty oppresses you; and if both health and abundance have departed, you are a child of God, and your name is not blotted out from the roll of the elect. Why, brothers and sisters, there are flowers that bloom in winter, if we have but grace to see them. Never was there a night so dark for the soul but what some lone star of hope might be discerned, and never a spiritual tempest so terrible but what there was a haven into which the soul could dock if it had but enough confidence in God to make a run for it. Rest assured that though you have fallen very low, you might have fallen lower if it were not that underneath are the everlasting arms. A doubting, distrustful spirit will wither the few blossoms which remain upon your bough, and if half the wells are frozen by affliction, unbelief will freeze the other half by its despondency. Brothers and sisters, you will win no good, but you may get incalculable mischief by a troubled heart; it is a root which bears no fruit except wormwood.

A troubled heart makes that which is bad worse. It magnifies, aggravates, caricatures, misrepresents. If but an ordinary foe is in your way, a troubled heart makes him swell into a giant. "We were in their sight but as grasshoppers," said the 10 evil spies, "yes, and we were but as grasshoppers in our own sight when we saw them." But it was not so. No

doubt the men were very tall, but they were not so big after all as to make an ordinary six-foot man look like a grasshopper. Their fears made them grasshoppers by first making them fools. If they had possessed but ordinary courage they would have been *men*, but being cowardly they subsided into grasshoppers. After all, what is an extra three, four, or five feet of flesh to a man? Is not the bravest soul the tallest? If he of shorter stature is but nimble and courageous, he will have the best of it; little David made short work of great Goliath. Yet so it is; unbelief makes out our difficulties to be most gigantic, and then it leads us to suppose that never a soul had such difficulties before, and so we egotistically lament, "I am the man that has seen affliction." We claim to be peers in the realm of misery, if not the emperors of the kingdom of grief. Yet it is not so. Why? What ails you? The headache is excruciating! Well, it is bad enough, but what would you say if you had seven such aches at once, and cold and nakedness to back them! The twitches of rheumatism are horrible! Right well can I endorse that statement! But what then? Why there have been men who have lived with such tortures thrice told all their lives, like Baxter, who could count all his bones because each one had made itself heard by its own peculiar pain. I know that you and I often suffer under depression of spirit and physical pain, but what is our complaint compared with the diseases of Calvin, the man who preached at the break of every day to the students in the cathedral, and worked on till long past midnight, and was all the while a mass of disease, a complicated agony? You are poor! Ah yes! But you have your own room, scanty as it is, and there are hundreds in the workhouse who find sorry comfort there. It is true you have to work hard. Yes, but think of the Huguenot galley slave in the olden times, who for the love of Christ was bound with chains to the oar, and scarcely knew rest day or night. Think of the sufferings of the martyrs of Smithfield, or of the saints who rotted in their prisons. Above all, let your eyes turn to the great Apostle and High Priest of your profession, and "consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be weary and faint in your mind."—

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

Yet this is the habit of our unbelief to draw our picture in the blackest possible colors, to tell us that the road is unusually rough and utterly impassable, that the storm is such a tornado as never blew before, that our name will be down in the wreck register, and that it is impossible that we should ever reach the haven.

Moreover, *a troubled heart is most dishonorable to God.* It makes the Christian think very harshly of his tender heavenly Friend; it leads him to suspect eternal faithfulness, and to doubt unchangeable love. Is this a little thing? It breathes into the Christian a proud rebellious spirit. He judges his Judge, and misjudges. He has not learned Job's philosophy; he cannot say, "Shall we receive good from the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; and blessed be the name of the Lord." Inward distress makes the humble, meek, teachable child of God to become a willful, wicked, rebellious offender in spirit. Is this a little thing? And meanwhile, it makes the family and the outsiders who know the Christian to doubt the reality of those truths of God of which the Christian used to boast in his brighter

days. Satan suggests to them, "You see, these Christian people are no better sustained than others. See," says the fiend, "they are as petulant, as unbelieving, and as rebellious as the rest of mankind; it is all a sham, a piece of enthusiasm which will not endure an ordinary trial." Is this a small matter? Surely there are mouths enough to revile the throne of God, there are lips enough to utter blasphemy against Him without His own dear children turning against Him because He frowns upon them. Surely they should be bowed to the earth at the mere suspicion that they could do such a thing, and cry to God to save them from a troubled heart lest they should rebel against Him.

I feel with regard to the Christian church that the truth of God which I am endeavoring to bring forward is above all things essential. The mischief of the Christian church at large is a lack of holy confidence in God. The reason why we have had as a church, I believe, unprecedented prosperity has been that on the whole we have been a courageous, hopeful, and joyous body of Christian people who have believed in our own principles most intensely, and have endeavored to propagate them with the most vehement earnestness. Now I can suppose the devil coming in among us, and endeavoring to dishearten us by this or that supposed failure or difficulty. "Oh," he says, "will you ever win the victory? Look! Sin still abounds, notwithstanding all the preaching and all the praying. Are not the jails full? Do you see any great moral change worked after all? Surely you will not make the advances you expected; you might as well give up." Yes, and when once an army can be demoralized by a lack of spirit, when once the British soldier can be assured that he cannot win the day, that even at the push of the bayonet nothing can await him but defeat, then the rational conclusion he draws is that every man had better take care of himself, and look to his heels and flee to his home. But oh, if we can feel that the victory is not precarious nor even doubtful but absolutely certain, and if each one of us can rest assured that the Lord of hosts is with us, that the God of Jacob is our refuge, that the most discouraging circumstances which can possibly occur are only mere incidents in the great struggle, mere eddies in the mighty current that is bearing everything before it; if we can but feel that sooner should heaven and earth pass away than God's promise be broken, I say, if we can keep our courage up at all times, if from the youngest of us who have lately joined, to the venerable veterans who have for years fought at our side, we can feel that we must win, that the purposes of God must be fulfilled, that the kingdoms of this world must become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, then we shall see bright and glorious things.

Some of you grow discouraged because you have taught in the Sunday school, and you have seen no conversions in your class, and you want to sneak away among the baggage; others of you have tried to preach in the streets and you did not get on, and you feel half inclined not to do anything more. Is this right? Some of you have not felt as happy with other Christian people as you would like to be; you do not think others respect you quite up to the mark that you have marked for yourselves on your thermometer of dignity, and you are inclined to run away. Is this right? Now I will boldly say to those of you who are inclined to run, run, for our resolution is to stand fast. Those who are afraid, let them go to their homes, for our eyes are on the battle and the crown.

Those of you who cannot bear a little roughness and cannot fight for Christ, I had almost said, we shall be better without your cowardly spirits, but I would rather pray for you, that you may pluck up heart and cry with holy boldness, "Nothing shall discourage us." If all the devils in hell should appear visibly before us, and show their teeth with flame pouring from their mouths as from 10,000 ovens, yet as long as the Lord of hosts lives, by His grace we will not fear, but lift up our banners and laugh our enemies to scorn.—

"We will in life and death
His steadfast truth declare,
And publish with our latest breath
His love and guardian care."

There is a great deal more to say, but we cannot say it; perhaps you will think it over, and perhaps you will perceive that of all the mischiefs that might happen to a good man, it is certainly one of the greatest to let his heart be troubled; and that of all the good things that belong to a Christian soldier, a bold heart and confidence in God are not the least. As long as we do not lose heart we have not lost the day; but if confidence in God departs, then the floods have burst into the vessel, and what can save it? What indeed, but that eternal love which comes in to the rescue even at our extremity?

II. In the second place, THE ADVICE THAT IS GIVEN IS PRACTICABLE—it can be carried out. "Let not your heart be troubled." "Oh," says somebody, "that's very easy to say, but very hard to do." Here's a man who has fallen into a deep ditch, and you lean over the hurdle and say to him, "Don't be troubled about it." "Ah," he says, "that's very pretty for you that are standing up there, but how am I to be at ease while up to my neck in mud?" There is a noble ship stranded, and liable to be broken up by the breakers, and we speak from a trumpet and say to the mariners on board, "Don't be alarmed." "Oh," they say, "very likely not, when every timber is shivering, and the vessel is going to pieces." But when He who speaks is full of love, pity, and might, and has it in His own power to make His advice become prophetic of deliverance, we need not raise difficulties, but we may conclude that if Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled," our heart need not be troubled. There is a way of keeping the heart out of trouble, and the Savior prescribes the method. First, *He indicates that our resort must be to faith.* If in your worst times you would keep your head above water, the life belt must be *faith*. Now, Christian, do you not know this? In the olden times how were men kept from perishing but by faith? Read that mighty chapter in Hebrews, and see what faith did—how believers overcame armies, put to flight the army of aliens, quenched the violence of fire, and stopped the mouths of lions. There is nothing which faith has not done or cannot do. Faith is girdled about with the omnipotence of God for her belt; she is the great wonder-worker. Why, there were men in the olden times whose troubles were greater than yours, whose discouragements and difficulties in serving God were a great deal more severe than any you and I have known, yet they trusted God; they trusted God, and they were not confounded; they rested in Him, and they were not ashamed. Their puny arms worked miracles, and their uplifted voices in prayer brought blessings from on high. What God did of old He will do now—He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Christian, commit yourself to faith. Did not faith bring

your first comfort to you? Remember when you were in despair under a sense of sin? What brought you joy? Was it good works? Was it your inward feelings? The first ray of light that came to your poor dark spirit, did it not come from the cross through believing? Oh, that blessed day when first I cast myself on Jesus and saw my sins numbered on the scapegoat's head of old, what a flood of light faith brought then! Open the same window, for the sun is in the same place, and you will get light from it. Go not, I pray you, to any other well but to this well of your spiritual Bethlehem which is within the gate, the water of which is still sweet and still free to you.

Ah, dear friends, there is one reason why you should resort to faith, namely, that it is the only thing you have to resort to. What can you do if you do not trust your God? Under many troubles, when they are real troubles, the creature is evidently put to confusion; human ingenuity itself fails. We are like the seamen in a storm who reel to and fro, and stagger like drunken men and are at their wits end. Oh let us, now that every other anchor is drug, cast out the great sheet anchor, for that will hold. Now that every refuge has failed, let us fly to the Strong for strength, for God will be our helper. Surely it ought not to be difficult for a child to believe his father; it should not therefore be difficult for us to trust in our God today, and so to lift our spirits out of the tumult of their doubts. Somebody will say, "Well, I can understand that faith is a practical way of getting out of trouble, but I cannot understand how we are to have faith." Well, in this the Savior helps us. You remember what He said when the people were hungry—"Give you them to eat." "Ah," they said, "there are so many; how can we feed them?" The Master began by saying, "How many loaves have you?" That is just what He says here. He says, "It is faith that will get you out of trouble; but how much faith have you?" He answers for them, "You believe in God." I must do the same by you. Faith is that which will deliver you. You say, "Where am I to get it?" Well, you have some already, have you not? You have five barley loaves and a few small fishes. You are unbelieving creatures, but you have some measure of faith. You believe that there is a God. "Yes," you say. You believe He is unchangeable, you believe that He is full of love, good and kind, and true and faithful. Now, really that is a great deal to begin with. You believe in God; the most of us believe in a great deal more than that; we not only believe in a God, and in the excellence of His character, but we believe that He has a chosen people, that He has made a covenant with them, ordered in all things and sure, that the promises of His covenant will be fulfilled, that He never puts away His people; we believe that all things work together for good to them who love God; we believe that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin; we believe that the Holy Spirit is given to dwell in His people. Now this is a great deal, a solid fulcrum upon which to place the lever. If you believe all that, you have only to properly employ this faith in order to lift your soul out of the horrible ditch of doubt and fear into which it has stumbled. You believe all this; surely, then, there is some room for hope and confidence.

The Savior goes on to say, "You believe in God," very well, exercise that same faith with regard to the case in hand. The case in hand was this—could they trust a dying Savior? Could they rest upon one who was about to be crucified, dead and buried, who would be gone from them except

that His poor mangled body would remain in their midst? "Now," says Jesus, "you see you have had enough of faith to believe in God; now exercise that same faith upon Me; trust Me as you trust God." From this I infer that the drift of the exhortation I am to give you this morning is this. "You have believed God about other things, exercise that same faith about this thing whatever it may be. You have believed God concerning the pardon of your soul; believe God about the child, about the wife, about the money, about the present difficulty. You have believed, concerning God, the great invisible One, and His great spiritual promises, now believe concerning this visible thing, this loss of yours, this cross of yours, this trial, this present affliction; exercise faith about that. Jesus Christ did in effect say to His people, "It is true I am going from you, but I want you to believe that I am not going far; I shall be in the same house as you are in, for my Father's house has many rooms in it, and though you will be here in these earthly mansions and I shall be in the heavenly mansions, yet they are all in the Father's house, for in My Father's house are many dwelling places." "I want you to believe," says Jesus, "that when I am away from you I am about your interests, I am preparing a place for you, and moreover that I intend coming back to you. My heart will be with you, and My person shall soon return to you." Now then, the drift of that applied to our case is this—believe that the present loss you sustain, or the present discouragement which threatens to overwhelm you—believe that God has a high design in it; that as Christ's departure was to prepare eternal mansions for His people, so your present loss is to prepare you for a spiritual gain. I like that word of Christ when He says, "If it were not so I would have told you."

When a man makes a general statement, if he knows an exception he ought to mention it, and if he does not mention it his statement is not strictly true. Jesus says, "If it were not so I would have told you." There is a great word of His which says, *"All* things work together for good to them who love God." A very awkward thing has happened to you; the trouble which you are now suffering is a very singular one; now, if ever there had been any exception to the rule which we have quoted, God in honor would have told it to you when He made the general statement, *"All* things work together for good to them who love God." Such is His love and wisdom that if there had been one trial that could happen to one of His people which would not work for the good of that child of His, He would have said, "Dear child, there is an exception—one trouble will happen to you which will not work for your good." I am positive that there is no exception to the statement that all things work together for good to them who love God, because if there had been an exception He would have put it in, He would have told us of it, that we might know how far to trust and when to leave off trusting, how far to rejoice and when to be cast down. Your case, then, is no exception to the rule; all that is happening is working for your everlasting benefit. Another place, however, another place will reveal this to you. Think of your Father's house and its mansions, and it will mitigate your griefs. "Alas for us if you were all and nothing beyond, O earth." There is another and a better land, and in your Father's house, where the many mansions are, it may be you shall be privileged to understand how these light afflictions,

which are but for a moment, have worked out for you a far more exceedingly and eternal weight of glory.

Before I close this point, let me say it ought to be a great deal easier for you and me to live above heart-trouble than it was for the apostles; I mean easier than it was to the apostles at the time when the Savior spoke to them and for 40 days afterwards. You say, "How was that?" Why because you have three things which they had not. You have *experience* of many past troubles out of which you have been delivered. They had only been converted at the outside of three years; they had not known much trouble, for Jesus in the flesh had dwelt among them to screen off troubles from them. Some of you have been converted thirty, 40—what if I say 60 years, and you have had abundance of trouble—you have not been screened from it. Now all this experience ought to make it easier for you to say, "My heart shall not be troubled." Again, you have received *the Holy Spirit,* and they had not. The Holy Spirit was not given, as you remember, until the day of Pentecost. His direct government in the church was not required while Christ was here. You have the Spirit, the Comforter to abide with you forever; surely you ought to be less distracted than they were. Thirdly, you have the whole of *Scripture,* they had but a part. They certainly had not the richest Scriptures of all, for they had not the Evangelists nor any of the New Testament, and having, as we have, all that store of promise and comfort, we ought surely to find it no hard work to obey the sweet precept, "Let not your heart be troubled."

III. THE EXHORTATION OF THE TEXT OUGHT TO BE VERY PRECIOUS TO ALL OF US THIS MORNING, and we should make a point of pleading for the Holy Spirit's aid to enable us to carry it out. Remember that the loving advice *came from Him.* Who said, "Let not your heart be troubled." Who could have said it but the Lord Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief? The mother says to the child, "Do not cry, child; be patient." That sounds very differently from what it would have done if the schoolmaster had said it, or if a stranger in the street had spoken. "Do not let your heart be troubled," might be a stinging remark from a stranger, but coming from the Savior, who "knows what strong temptations mean, for He has felt the same," it drops like virgin honey for sweetness, and like the balm of Gilead for healing power. *Jesus says,* "Let not your heart be troubled." His own face was towards the cross, He was hard by the olivepress of Gethsemane; He was about to be troubled as never man was troubled, and yet among His last words were these, "Let not your hearts be troubled." As if He wanted to monopolize all tears, and would not have them shed so much as one; as if He longed to take all the heart-trouble Himself and remove it far from them; as if He would have them exercise their hearts so much with believing that they would not have the smallest room left for grief; would have them so much taken up with the glorious result of His sufferings in procuring for them eternal mansions that they would not think about their own present losses, but let them be swallowed up in a mighty sea of joyful expectation. Oh the tenderness of Christ! "Let not your hearts be troubled." He is not here, this morning, in person, (would God He were!) but oh, if He will but look at us out of those eyes of His which wept, and make us feel that this cheering word wells up from that heart which was pierced with the spear, we shall find it to be a blessed word to our soul. Say it, sweet Je-

sus; say to every mourner, "Let not your heart be troubled." Brothers and sisters, the text should have to us the dignity of a command as well as the sweetness of counsel. Shall we be tormented with trouble after the Captain has said, "Let not your heart be troubled"? The Master of your spirit, who has bought you with His precious blood, demands that the harp strings of your heart should resound to the touch of His love, and of His love alone, and will you surrender those strings to be mournfully smitten by grief and unbelief? No, rather like George Herbert, say, "My harp shall find You, and every string shall have its attribute to sing." At Your word instead of mourning, I will bring forth joy; as You bid me I will put off my sackcloth and cast away my ashes, and I will rejoice in the Lord always, and yet again I will rejoice." Prize the counsel, because it comes from the Well-Beloved.

Prize it next because it *points to Him.* He says, "You believe in God; believe also in Me." You know, if it were not for the context which requires the particular construction here used, one would have looked to find these words, "You believe in Me, believe also in God." Jesus was speaking to Jews, disciples, who from their youth up had learned to believe in Emmanuel; believe in Me. There, there, there is the very cream of the whole matter. If you need comfort, Christian, you must hear Jesus say, Believe also *in Me;* you must approach afresh to the fountain, and believe in the power of the blood; you must take that fair linen of His righteousness and put it on, and believe that—

"With His spotless vesture on,
You're holy as the Holy One."

You must see Jesus dead in His grave, and believe that you died there in Him, and that your sin was buried there in Him. You must see Him rise, and you must believe also in Him, that His resurrection was your resurrection, that you are risen in Him. You must mark Him as He climbs the starry way up to the appointed throne of His reward; this must be your belief also in Him, that He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Himself. You must see Him far above all principalities and powers, the ever-living and reigning Lord, and you must believe that because He lives you shall live, also. You must see Him with all things put under His feet, and you must believe that all things are under His feet *for you;* sin, death, hell, things present and things to come, all subject unto the Son that He may give to you, and to as many as the Father has given Him, eternal life. Oh, this is comfort! No place for a child's aching head like its mother's bosom. No shadow of a great rock in this weary land like our Savior's love consciously overshadowing us. His own side is the place where He protects His flock from the sun. This is the pasture where He makes them lie down; this is the river from which He gives them drink, namely, Himself. Communion with Jesus is glory. The saints feast, but it is upon His flesh; they drink, but it is of His blood; they triumph, but it is in His shame; they rejoice, but it is in His grief; they live, but it is with His life; and they reign, but it is through His power. It is precious advice, then, because it comes from Him and points to Him.

Once more, it is precious advice because *it speaks of Him.* It says. "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you." Jesus is here seen in action;

anything which makes us remember Christ should be prized. Jesus Christ comes to comfort us, but that comfort is all about Himself; we should greatly prize it. We want to know more of Jesus. One great deficiency is our ignorance of Him, and if the advice of this morning is calculated to make us know Him better and value Him more, let us prize it. Think of all He said and did, and what He is doing for us now. Now let your thoughts see Him beyond the glittering starry sky with the many crowns upon His head; see Him as your representative, claiming your rights, pleading before the throne for you, scattering blessings for you on earth, and preparing joys for you above.

That is the last thought, namely, that the advice is precious, because it hints that we are to be *with Him forever.* "An hour with my God," says the hymn, "will make up for it all." So it will; but what will an *eternity* with our God be, forever to behold Him smiling, forever to dwell in Him! "Abide in Me." That is heaven on earth. "Abide in Me" is all the heaven we shall need in heaven. He is preparing the place now, making it ready for us above, and here below making us ready for it. Courage, then, brothers and sisters, courage; let us not fret about the way; our heads are towards home. We are not outward-bound vessels, thank God; every wind that blows is bringing us nearer to our native land. Our tents are frail, we often pitch and strike them, but we nightly pitch them—

"A day's march nearer home."

Be of good cheer, soldier, the battle must soon end; and that blood-stained banner, when it shall wave so high, and that shout of triumph, when it shall thrill from so many thousand lips, and that grand assembly of heroes, all of them made more than conquerors, and the sight of the King in His beauty, riding in the chariot of His triumph, paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem, and the acclamations of spirits glorified, and the shouts and joyful music of cherubims and seraphims—all these shall make up for all the battles of today—

"And they who, with their Master,
Have conquered in the fight,
Forever and forever
Are clad in robes of light."

Be that, by God's grace, ours. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 16.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

A WORD IN SEASON
NO. 731

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

"When men are cast down, then you shall say, There is lifting up; and He shall save the humble person."
Job 22:29.

ALTHOUGH we cannot take everything that Eliphaz the Temanite happened to say as being of divine authority, the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit; yet in this case he evidently gives utterance to such a great and important truth of God that we may regard these words of his as being the words of God, confirmed as they are by like sentiments to be found in other parts of the Scriptures.

If you read the verse carefully, you will sympathize with the perplexity of expositors, who have been not a little puzzled to know which out of three meanings is the one intended. I shall not presume to pronounce an arbitrary decision; but after mentioning the three different constructions, I shall dwell upon the last, and amplify it for practical uses.

The first is, *that this verse may be read by way of discrimination.* When other men—the wicked and ungodly—are cast down, believers, resting upon their God, shall be able to say, "There *is* lifting up," and instead of harboring a thought of despair, they shall cling to the promise that God will save the humble person. The text may thus indicate the distinction there is between the righteous and the wicked. When the flood came, then the ungodly world was bowed down by fear, but Noah could say, "There is lifting up," and as the ark began to float upon the waters, his mind was perfectly convinced that God would save the humble. When the fiery sleet began to fall upon Sodom and Gomorrah, then the wicked were wise too late, and they, too, were filled with dismay; but Lot, as he escaped out of the city, could feel that there was for him "lifting up," and that God had saved out of the midst of destruction that "humble person," whose ears and heart had been vexed with the ungodly speeches of the Sodomites. Let us learn, therefore, and so leave this aspect of the text, that the Lord has put a difference between Israel and Egypt—a difference never as conspicuous as in time of trouble. He will not mete out the same measure to His friends as to His enemies. The black side of the pillar of providence shall be turned towards the Egyptians, while the bright side

shall shine fully and cheerfully into the faces of the Israelites. Just as the Red Sea is swallowing up God's foes, His friends upon the other bank shall be singing their psalms of victory and, magnifying His power to save. Humble Christian, whatever may occur, *you* need never fear. If all the predicted tribulations which some men delight in anticipating should be fulfilled tomorrow, it would not matter to you. If the earth should rock and reel, if the sun should be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, and the stars should fall like fig leaves from the tree; you, if you could no longer be safe under heaven, would be caught up into heaven; but anyhow, God would be sure to preserve you. When the wicked are bowed down, you shall be able to sing, "There is lifting up."

The second way of reading the text is full of *personal* consolation. "When men are cast down"—appropriating the calamity when we ourselves are cast down, and leaving out the discrimination between the righteous and the wicked—when *we,* in common with the rest of mankind, suffer by the adversities incidental to all men—when *we* find out that we are "born to trouble as the sparks fly upward"—then our Father comes to our relief, cheers us with comfort, and inspirits us with hope, sweetly whispering in our ears, "There is lifting up; hope in God." After all the waves and billows had gone over the psalmist's head, his hope rises up out of the deep, and sings, as the waters stream from her hair, "Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him." And as her countenance glistens in the sun, and is made bright by the brine into which she has dived, she adds, "He is the help of my countenance and my God." brothers and sisters, possibly you are at this very hour sorely cast down. You are reflecting upon yesterday's ills, or foreboding worse ills on the morrow. "What shall I eat? And what shall I drink?" may be questions which are pressing grievously on your mind. Parents may be here whose dear children are sick, or it may be worse than that; perhaps there is a father whose rebellious son is vexing his heart, and making his hair turn gray. You are bowed down, many of you; some from one cause and some from another. Oh that your trials may bring your faith into exercise! You are in your Father's hands. He is the God of hope; yes, and He is the God of patience and consolation. The Lord reigns; all things work together for good to them who love God. You may safely conclude that there is lifting up. Though you may now feel very humble under these afflicting dispensations, yet, as certainly as God's Word says, "He shall save the humble person," so certainly will He send salvation unto you; be of good courage, then; perhaps the text is God's message to your sinking spirits—"It is I; be not afraid."

The third way of understanding the text, however, is that upon which I wish to dwell. *A practical obligation is here enforced.* "When men are cast down"—that is, when *other* men are cast down, either by spiritual anxieties or by peculiar troubles of a worldly sort—then the Christian's business is to act the part of a comforter, to step in and say to his brethren or his neighbors, "There is lifting up." It should be his responsibility to proclaim this good news—this panacea for heart-troubles—God saves humble souls; there is no necessity for despair this side of hell; as long as a man is in this trial state there is hope that his sackcloth may be put off, that he may be girded with gladness, and made partaker of the fullness of joy.

You will see then, friends that my intention is to address myself to Christians, earnestly exhorting them to look after opportunities for usefulness, that they may tell others of the glad tidings.

I. To this end, FAVORABLE SEASONS, a well-timed occasion, a suitable hour, should never be lost sight of. "When men are cast down."

You cannot talk with some men until you find them cast down. They are too shy and reserved, too proud and unapproachable; or perhaps too profane and blustering, to allow you to say a word to them about eternal things. But you can catch them sometimes. When sorrow has plowed the soil, the Good Seed may get, perhaps, into the heart that always was so hard. Now, Christian, as you read it, "When men are cast down," you will do well to remember that these seasons frequently occur in the life of every man. Sometimes men are cast down because they have had losses in business, or have had sickness in the house, or death has come and taken away a child, or they are infirm in body, or the cholera has been down the street, or something or other has occurred to alarm and agitate and dispirit them. They feel that this world is not the happy world they thought it was. Now is your opportunity; now is your time. When men are cast down, then go to them and say, "There is lifting up." Tell them that there is another lamp, that was never kindled in this world and never blown out in this world, either, which will gild the darkness of their poverty, of their sickness, and of their sorrow. Be sure not to let a single providential opportunity escape you, but plunge in, now that God has made the breach in the sinner's city wall. Make haste now! Dash in, you soldiers of the cross, sword in hand!

Sometimes men are cast down when they have been listening to a very solemn sermon. God has helped the minister to sketch their portraits, and they have sat and wondered at it; and though they have been careless before, yet now they begin to quake. Have you ever found your friends leaving the House of God thoughtful and serious—not chatting

about a thousand frivolities, but saying to you, when you get home—"What a striking sermon!" Why, such things occur here every day. The tear of penitence often waters this floor; and when it does not amount to that, though the sinner's goodness may be as the morning cloud and as the early dew, yet there are frequent times when our hearers are impressed and depressed. They sit in the pew and begin to think it is all wrong with them; their soul is cast down, and they wish that they could find salvation. Now is your time, Christian; now is your time! Do not lose it! Do not let them go behind those curtains, or outside those doors till you have told them that there is lifting up. When the darkness is around their spirits, point them to the great Light of the world. Tell them that "there is life for a look at the Crucified One," that there is life at this very moment for everyone who casts himself upon the Redeemer's finished sacrifice.

These opportunities are very frequent, and if you think for a minute you will see that they are not to be despised by those of you who wish to win souls. If David would win the battle he must take care to remember God's advice. "When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then shall you bestir yourself." When you see the sign of an impression in a man's mind, then you should be active to seek to bring the truth of God home to him, and to lead him to the cross, for at such times men are willing to listen. They would stop their ears before, but now they will give you a comparatively cheerful audience. No, they are often even anxious to hear, for they will send for the minister when they are sick. And at a funeral, what an opportunity the Christian minister may often have, and not the Christian minister only, but any of you! When God's great minister, Death, comes into a house, then remember they will want to hear you. A man's fellow workman, who chaffed the Christian and laughed at him, will be pleased enough to see him when the wife gets ill, and he will even ask him to come and tell her of the things which make for her peace. Never be slow to go, my brothers and sisters. If you can but find time, never miss one of these opportunities. Now that the fish are ready to take the bait, you Galilean fishermen, let the nets be cast and the hooks laid, and seek if you can to catch souls.

These opportunities, be it remembered, *are sent by God for this very purpose.* No doubt providence is the handmaid of grace. If Christians were but wide awake they would soon see that the wheels of providence are all working to assist the church. To an earnest Christian laborer everything is a tributary of labor. He knows how to use the roughest instruments. I will venture to say that the beasts of the field are in league with him, and the stones of the field are at peace with him. For him chol-

era is less to be dreaded than to be turned to account; it will give him an entrance where he found none before. Even poverty, with all its drawbacks, may help the man of God who sincerely desires to bring souls to Jesus. Greatly as you dread the evils which are before you, yet may you have a holy skill to use them, as the mariner does an ill wind, just tacking about, and putting the sail so that the wind, which seemed to drive in his teeth, may help him towards his desired haven.

At such times, then, when men are cast down, I say it to you, brothers and sisters, and especially would I say it to myself, let none of these favorable seasons be lost.

II. THE ACCEPTABLE TIDINGS we have to announce may now for a few minutes engage our thoughts. Do any of you ask, "If we speak to these people, what are we to tell them?" You are to tell them that "There is lifting up." That is the best and most opportune news you can bring them after all. When men are not cast down we have to tell them that they ought to be. We have to deal out to them the law of God, as the seamstress takes the sharp needle first, and then draws the silken thread afterwards. But in this case, when a man is cast down, the needle has gone through. Men *are* impressed, thoughtful, anxious, and now the gospel which we have to take to them is that there is lifting up. Of all things in the world to be dreaded despair is the chief. Let a man be abandoned to despair and he is ready for all sorts of sins. When fear unnerves him action is dangerous; but when despair has loosed his joints and paralyzed his conscience, the vultures hover round him waiting for their prey. As long as a man has hope for himself you may have hope of him; but Satan's objective is to drive out the last idea of hope from men, that then they may give themselves up to be his slaves forever. Brothers and sisters, let me just say to you who are in trouble—and I hope every faithful Christian will repeat what I say again and again—THERE IS HOPE. There is hope about your pecuniary difficulties, about your sickness, about your present affliction. God can help you through it. Do not sit down with your elbows on your knees and cry all day. That will not get you through it. Call upon God who sent the trouble. He has a great design in it. It may be that He has sent it as a shepherd sends his black dog to fetch the wandering sheep to him. It may be He has a design in making you lose temporal things that you may gain eternal things. Many a mother's soul had not been saved if it had not been for that dear infant which was taken from her bosom; not till it was taken to the skies did God give the attractive influence which drew her heart to pursue the path to heaven.

Do not say there is no hope; other people have been as badly off as you are; and even if it should seem as if you have come to the end of your rope, yet still there is hope. Go and try again on Monday morning, [prayer meeting at the Tabernacle] my good friend. God's providence has a thousand ways of helping us if we have but the heart to pray. Are you in despair about your character? It may be that there is somewhere here a woman who says, "I have fallen; my character is gone; there is no hope for me." My sister, there is lifting up; some who have fallen as terribly as you have done have been restored by sovereign grace. And there may be one here who has been a drunkard, or about to become a thief—no one knows it, perhaps, but he is conscious of great degradation, and he says, "I shall never be able to look my fellow men in the face." Ah, my dear friend, you do not know what Christ can do for you if you but rest and trust in Him. Supposing you should be made into a new creature, would not that alter the matter? "Oh." you say, "but that can never be!" No, say I, but that *shall* be, for Christ says, "Behold, I make all things new." "If any man is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature." There was an old fable about a spring at which old men washed their faces, and then grew young. Now there is a spring which wells up from the heart of the Lord Jesus, and if an old sinner washes there, not only his face, but his whole spirit, shall become like unto a little child, and shall be clean in the sight of God. There is hope still.

"Ah," says one, "but you do not know my case." No, my dear friend, and I do not particularly desire to know it, because this sweeping truth of God can meet it no matter what it may be. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Oh, what a precious gospel I have to preach! I have not to preach a little Christ for little sinners, but a great Savior for great offenders. Noah's ark was not made to hold a few mites, but the elephant went in, and the lion went in, and the largest beasts of prey went in, and there was found room for each of them. So my Master, who is the great ark of salvation, did not come into this world to save a few of you who are little sinners, but "He is able to save unto the uttermost all them who come unto God by Him." See Him yonder? See Him on the cross in extreme agony, bearing numberless griefs and torments, and sweating in agony, all for love of you who were His enemies? Trust Him. Trust Him, for there is hope; there is lifting up. However bowed down you may be, there is in the gospel hope even for you. I seem as if I were walking along a corridor, and I see a number of condemned cells. As I listen at the keyhole I can hear those inside weeping in doleful, grievous laments, "There is no hope, no hope, no hope." And I can see the warden at the other end

smiling calmly to him, as he knows that none of the prisoners can come out as long as they say there is no hope. It is a sign that their manacles are not broken, and that the bolts of their cells are not removed. But oh, if I could look in! I think I can, I think I can open the little wicket gate, and cry, "There is hope!" He who said there is no hope is a liar and a murderer from the beginning, and the father of lies; there IS hope since Jesus died; there is hope anywhere except in the infernal hell. There is hope in the hospital where a man has sickened, and is within the last hour of his departure. There is hope though men have sinned themselves beyond the pale of society; there is hope for the convict, though he has had to smart under the lash; hope for the man who has cast himself away. Jesus is still able to save! "No hope" is not to be said by any of the mariners life brigade while he sights the crew of the sinking vessel. "No hope" is not to be said by any of the fire brigade while he knows there are living men in the burning pile. "No hope" is not to be said by any one of the valiant brigade of the Christian church while the soul is still within reach of the sound of mercy. "No hope" is a cry which no human tongue should utter, which no human heart should heed. Oh, may God grant us grace, whenever we get an opportunity to go and tell all we meet with whom are bowed down, "There is lifting up." And tell them where it is. Tell them it is only at the cross. Tell them it is through the precious blood. Tell them it is to be had for nothing, through simply trusting Christ. Tell them it is of free grace, that no merits of theirs are needed, that no good things are they to bring, but that they may come just as they are, and find lifting up in Christ.

III. What JOYFUL EMPLOYMENT this is. I would like to go forth enlisting tonight. I shall not require you to wear scarlet. You shall wear what you like; but if I may but enlist you I shall be very happy. Christian men and women, all of you without exception, old and young, I want you. I know many of you are already engaged, but I want you all to follow out the dictates of my text, "When men are cast down, then you shall say, There is lifting up; and He shall save the humble person." I want you to volunteer in this blessed enterprise, this heavenly mission of saying to cast-down ones, "There is lifting up."

If you engage in this holy adventure there are several things which you will need. The first will be *observation*. You must have a quick eye to know when a man is cast down. Some people are so out of sympathy with souls that they do not know a broken heart from a hard heart; but there is a way of getting into such communion with people without even talking with them, that you know within a little who is impressed and who is not. I would like to have, all over the Tabernacle, a little lot of you

Christian people like sentries, watching that young man who is here for the first time tonight; watching that young woman who has been here for the last six weeks—watching your opportunity; as soon as ever you see the first wave of the Spirit's manifestation—the face is often the tell-tale sign of what is going on within—to speak to them. I want you to watch, so as to say, "Now that one is cast down I will break the ice, I will speak, and I will say, "There is lifting up." You must have keen eyes to watch for the Spirit's work if you are to be fishers of men.

Next to this you have need of *deep sympathy*. If you try to speak for Christ, and do it in a rough way, you had better hold your tongue. A person I saw only a day or two ago said that she was standing in deep thought after a sermon, under which she had been devoutly impressed, when a good friend accosted her in a gruff voice and with an uncouth manner, and said, "When are you coming forward to join the Church?" It was well meant; but it was done in such a way that every good impression melted before the repulsive tones. Speak gently and kindly, with tenderness and sympathy. You know what I mean. There is a world of difference between the putting on of a pretense of kindness and the real "kindness" which comes right down to a man and makes him feel that you really do sympathize with him, and can enter into all his griefs. Ask the Lord, Christian friends, when you have got a quick eye for observation, to drop a tear with it, so that you may know how to weep with them who weep, and to speak gently.

Another thing you will need will be *knowledge*. How can you tell them about the Savior if you do not understand yourselves how it is that He saves, or never proved the remedy you attempt to apply? Be well-instructed in the faith, and seek also to be well-instructed in the twists and turns of the human heart, so that you may know how to follow up these persons when they will try to escape from their own mercy, and, if possible, to put from them the comfort which you have to bring them.

In all this you will find great help from your own *experience*. No man is so fitted to bring others to Christ as one who has come himself, though perhaps the means by which he was drawn may have been peculiar and somewhat different from the common course. It was said that Martin Luther was one of the best teachers for a minister. He had been so much troubled in getting peace for his own soul that he was singularly well-qualified to assist others who were struggling in the Slough of Despond. Make good use of your experience; store up lessons from it; so you will be making yourselves yet more and more serviceable as a helper to these distressed ones.

Add to your experience *assurance*. The text does not tell us to say to these people, "I *hope* there may be lifting up," but, "There *is* lifting up." Full assurance makes a man strong. The gospel is your lever; but full assurance must be the arm to work it with; yes, and the fulcrum, too, upon which the lever must rest. Know yourselves to be saved. Do not live in the misty Dungeon of Doubt, where "I hope so," is the only ray of light that breaks through the crevice, while "I fear it is not so," is the reflection cast on the opposite wall. Come forth into the daylight that you may be sure of it, then you will be able to speak boldly, and so you will be likely to comfort those who are cast down.

And let me recommend *promptness* to you. There is nothing like quickness and decision in speaking when the opportunity presents itself. If you are about to seal a letter, you must bring down the seal while the wax is still hot enough to receive the impression. Do not procrastinate, and say, "Well, I would like to speak to that young man, but I will put it off till tomorrow." If he has the appearance of being impressionable tonight, look after him now. As "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," so a present opportunity is worth unspeakably more than any precarious venture that lies beyond your present reach. Do not let the time slip.

While, however, it becomes you to be prompt, *you need not be in a hurry.* Calm self-possession is very preferable to impetuous haste. I remember seeing a doctor when there was an accident in the street. He proceeded immediately to the spot, but do you think he went rushing down to the man as if he would break his neck? No; on the contrary, he walked down very quietly and reservedly to the chemist's shop where the man was lying, and I could not help thinking that this was a common-sense thing to do even in an emergency; for if he had run and got out of breath, he would not have been able to have done half as well when he got there as he was able to do by going steadily to his work. The feverish excitement of hurry you should avoid; but there must be no delay. Unseemly haste might spoil your aim because you would not be able to speak properly; but a senseless hesitancy would miss the golden opportunity, thwart the purpose altogether, and leave you to regret that you had ever spoken at all.

Still nothing will be of any use unless there is *much prayer*. We need pray that God may give efficacy to the counsels He has given us, and reward our obedience to them with abundant fruit. Oh, brothers and sisters, prayer is the grand thing, after all, for us who have no strength of ourselves. It is wonderful what prayer can do for any of us. A dear friend said the other day, "Look at Jacob. In the early part of his life there was

much that was unseemly in his character, and very much that was unhappy in his circumstances. Crafty himself, he was often the victim of craft, reaping the fruit of his own ways. But one night in prayer—what a change it did make in him! Why it raised him from the deep poverty of a cunning supplanter to the noble peerage of a prince in Israel." Bethel itself is hardly more memorable in his history than Peniel. And what might one night spent in prayer do for some of us? Supposing we were to try it instead of the soft bed! We need not go to the brook; it is enough that, like Jacob, we are alone in some place where sighs and cries would be heard by none but God. One night spent thus in solitary prayer might put the spurs on some of you, and make you spiritual knights in God's army, able to do great exploits! Oh, yes; may all other gracious exercises be started in prayer, crowned with prayer, and perfected by much prayer.

IV. I must now close by noticing some STIMULATING MOTIVES to engage in this blessed employment.

Remember, Christian friend, your own case. When you were troubled in spirit did anybody speak to you? Then you are bound to repay the kindness by speaking to someone who is now in the same condition. Or do you say that nobody spoke to you? Well, then, I am sure you blame them for not doing so; and you may well see to it that you do not incur the same censure yourselves. I thank God that most of you do try to look after souls; but occasionally, very occasionally, it happens that a young convert will say to me, "I have been here six months, sir, and no one has spoken to me." I sometimes ask them in what part of the Tabernacle they sit, and yet I do not like to know when I am informed. However, I will suppose that I have forgotten it now, or, at least I will forbear to indicate it tonight, but one of these times I shall make bold to say that there is a certain corner of the Tabernacle where nobody seems to care for souls. If I should do that, you know, it will be a cause of blushing and of shame to some of you. Do mend your ways before it comes to that. Oh, do not let there be a single spot in this place where it shall be possible for a person to sit even for a month without someone earnestly asking him about his soul! Do it wisely, prudently, gently; not rudely, but lovingly; not intrusively, but kindly. Who can tell how much good may be done by this simple means. Let it be done with a gracious motive, remembering how necessary it was in your own case.

Let it be done, moreover, *with a grateful recollection of what you owe to Christ.* Oh, you owe your own soul to Him; how can you repay Him but by bringing others? I beseech you, prove your gratitude, not by bringing the alabaster box and breaking it upon His head; but by bringing *sinners,* whose penitence and faith shall be sweeter perfume even than the

costly ointment which the woman poured on her Lord. Watch for souls out of gratitude to Him.

Let me cheer you onward by *the prospect of success.* Perhaps the very first person you speak to may be given you for your reward. Possibly you may meet with a repulse; if so, try again, and yet again and again, as long as you have breath. But what if you should bring only *one* soul to Christ? It would be a rich reward for a thousand disappointments!

Remember, dear friends, *that it is for your own good.* While you sleep you do not know whether you love Christ or not; but you would soon prove the sincerity of your love if you were trying to serve Him. You do not know what you can do till you have tried. He who can only do a little, if he does that little, will soon be able to do twice as much. If he still perseveres, he will be able to do *four* times as much presently, and his labors of love will increase and multiply till I know not what extent they may reach. You cannot preach, the most part of you; you could not go out into the street and proclaim the word of life, but you can talk to a neighbor, any or all of you; and since this is a thing that you can do, do it, I pray you; it may be breaking the ice for you, and by-and-by you will be able to swim in the deep waters, and serve the Lord right well. To make a beginning, therefore, I ask you to do this small thing. Oh, my Christian friends, shall the blood of souls lie on any of you? Would you wish to feel that you were responsible for the spiritual ruin of some person who sits next to you here? I wish I could always feel that I was clear of the blood of this congregation myself; but I do seek to be. Yet I feel convinced that my own efforts for the conversion of men are so feeble that if I do not have the assistance of you all, I cannot reckon upon a blessing commensurate to the great assembly gathered here; but if you will help me, if you will each of you watch as some of you do, if you will each pray as some of you do, if you all catch the holy enthusiasm, and are filled with the divine fire, I know not what eternal purposes God may here fulfill, nor what glory He may bring to His name! You have, many of you, been Christians now for years. You are not young, raw recruits, who need to be trained in the very elements of our spiritual warfare. You have seen battle; you have been in the midst of its din. I speak to you as to veterans—serve your God now! By the blood that bought you, by the Spirit that quickened you, by the rest that is in store for you, by the hell that awaits sinners if they perish—I charge you by the living God, the Judge of the quick and the dead—be instant in season and out of season! Be ever abundant in every good word and work! Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. And may His blessing descend upon the whole of our efforts, through His divine Spirit.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 19:1-27.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE HEART—A DEN OF EVIL
NO. 732

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 27, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."
Matthew 15:19.

WE cannot too often insist upon it that religion is a matter of the heart. It is the besetting sin of man to forget that God is a Spirit, and that worship rendered to God must be of a *spiritual* kind. Idolatry is the full carrying out of this mischievous propensity. Instead of adoring the Great Invisible, and giving Him the love of the heart, man sets up a block of wood or stone, and, burning incense and performing genuflections before it, he cries, "This is my god." Where this idolatry does not assume the very grossest form it takes another, which is equally as objectionable in the sight of God.

Man pleads that he cannot worship God with his heart unless his memory is assisted by some outward object, and then he smuggles in his idol, and gratifies his depraved nature with will worship and outward formalism. God requires soul worship, and men give Him body worship; He asks for the heart, and they present Him with their lips; He demands their thoughts and their minds, and they give Him banners, and vestments, and candles. Where man is hunted by very shame from outward superstitions, he betakes himself to anything sooner than yield his heart's love to his Maker, submit his intellect to the Great Creator's teaching, and render all his faculties to the service of the Most High. No matter how painful may be the mortification, rigid the penance, severe the abstinence, no matter how much may be taken from his purse or the wine vat, or from the store, he will be content to suffer anything sooner than bow before the Most High with a true confession of sin, and trust in the appointed Savior with sincere childlike faith. In this age, as much as in past times, the watchmen of our Israel must insist upon the spirituality of worship, for the old paganism lives among us, altered in form but unchanged in spirit. We spoke of idolatry as being buried at Athens and consigned to its tomb at Rome, but it lives in the Puseyism of the present hour; men are naturally idolaters, and it is nothing but idolatry which nowadays, in the toyshops of the Tractarians is polluting the simplicity of our worship by thrusting their childish symbols and emblems before the sublime Truth that God is to be worshipped in spirit, and only to be approached through the Atoning Sacrifice of His only-begotten Son.

This morning I trust I shall not be guilty of attracting your attention for a single moment to anything that is external, however gaudy or however simple. It is to the human heart that I ask you now to turn your eyes. It is to your own hearts, my Hearers, you who are converted and you who are not; it is to a consideration of your own inner natures, that I

entreat you now to turn your serious thoughts. My text is a mirror in which every man may see himself; may see, not his face which he can see anywhere, but his heart, his moral nature, his innermost self. Here, sin is man's heart laid bare, turned inside out, anatomized and depicted by One who cannot lie and cannot be deceived.

We shall come to the text at once, and observe, first, *the humiliating Doctrine which it teaches;* and then we shall occupy the rest of your time by mentioning *the kindred Doctrines of which it reminds us.*

I. FIRST NOTICE THE HUMILIATING TRUTH which the Savior here sets forth. He tells us that out of the heart all sorts of moral evils proceed. He selects not the milder forms of sin but the grosser shades; adulteries, murders, blasphemies, these are words of no common import, and stand for sins of no common dye. The accusation laid against human nature here is one of the most solemn that could possibly be put into words. The Savior has not minced matters in any degree, nor chosen smooth forms of speech, but He has selected the grossest shapes of human sin, and He has said that all these come out of the human heart. There have been men who have asserted that sins are merely accidents of man's position; but the Savior says they come out of his heart. Some have affirmed that they are mistakes of his judgment, that the social system bears so harshly at certain points that men can scarcely do otherwise than offend, for their judgment misleads them; the Savior, however, traces these offenses not to the head and its mistaken judgments, but to the heart and its unholy affections. He plainly tells us that the part of human nature which yields such poisonous fruit is not a bough which may be sawn off, a limb which may be cut away, but the very core and substance of the man—his heart. He, in effect, tells us that lust does not merely come out of the eyes, but from the inmost nature of a depraved being. Murder comes not, in the first place, from the hasty hand, but from a wild ungovernable heart. He declares that theft is not the mere result of a hasty temptation, but is the outflow of a covetous desire which dwells in the being of which disorganized affections are the real source. All the mischiefs mentioned in our text come out of man's essential self—that is what I understand the Savior to mean by the heart. The heart is the true man; it is the very citadel of the City of Mansoul; it is the fountain and reservoir of manhood, and all the rest of man may be compared to the many pipes which run from the fountain through the streets of a city. The Savior puts His finger on the mainspring of the machine of manhood, and cries, *"Here* is the evil." Like a great physician, He lays His hands upon the very core of human nature and exclaims, "Here is the disease." The leprosy of sin is not as to its primary seat in the head, nor the hand, nor the foot, but in the very heart; the poison is in the center, and consequently all the outlying members share in the poison.

By the heart we usually understand the affections, and doubtless the affections of man are the sources of his crimes. It is because man does not love his Maker with all his heart, and soul, and strength, but loves himself, that he therefore breaks his Maker's Laws to please himself. It is because man does not love that which is right, and good, and true, but because he delights in that which is false and evil, that his actions become defiled. It comes to the same thing, you see, whether you interpret

the word *"heart"* to mean the central core of the man, or to signify the affections; you come to the same result that it is the man's vital *self* which is wrong, it is manhood's real essence which is evil. Manhood in its most vital essence is corrupt through and through. To use the words of the Infinite Jehovah Himself, "Every imagination of the heart of man is evil from his youth." "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

Observe with humiliation those foul streams which the Savior declares flow from the heart of man. He speaks of *evil thoughts*. Some make little of thoughts of evil, but God does not so judge, for He judges an action not so much by the outward motions of the matter of the body by which the action is performed, as by the inward motion of the inner man by which that motion was instigated and dictated. Evil thoughts have in them the absolute essence of sin quite as surely as evil acts, for when we come to trace an action to its essential evil we have to look to the motive which dictates it, which motive brings us at once into the region of thought. So that evil thoughts, instead of being less evidently sinful than actions, are most clearly the very nest in which the principle and soul of sin is to be found. Men sometimes say, "We shall not be hanged for our thoughts," but it will be well for them to know that unless they repent of them, they certainly will be damned for their thoughts; and even if those thoughts of theirs never shaped themselves into actions, yet their guilt would remain. If the men were shut up in cells, so that they could not commit that which their nature instigated them to do, yet, as before the Lord, seeing they would have been such sinners outwardly if they could have been, their hearts are judged to be no better than the hearts of those who found opportunity to sin and used it. A vicious horse is none the better tempered because the kicking straps prevent his dashing the carriage to atoms; and so a man is really none the better because the restraints of custom and Providence may prevent his carrying out that which he would prefer. Poor fallen human nature behind the bars of laws, and in the cage of fear of punishment, is none the less a fearful creature; should its master unlock the door we should soon see what it would be and do.

Evil thoughts flow out of the heart. Such as evil thoughts of God, evil thoughts of man; thoughts about evil, doting imaginations, and foul desires, the rolling of evil under the tongue as a sweet morsel, and such like. Many a man who has not committed an outward act of sensual lust has nevertheless thought it over and relished it, and so perpetrated it in his soul. Many a man who had not the courage to be a thief in very deed, has nevertheless been a thief a thousand times over in his heart; and he who dared not blaspheme God with his lips has cursed God in his heart ten thousand times. These evil thoughts are signs of what is in the heart. They would not bubble up within us if they were not first there. They could not come into the mind if they were not essential to the soul.

Our Lord next speaks of *murders*, by which He means, according to John's interpretation of it, every form of unjustifiable anger. Those boiling overs of evil temper, in which we wish people were dead, or otherwise injured, and would gladly punish them if we could, are in the same class as murders. Murders themselves arise from the evil passions of the hu-

man heart. If the fire were not there, temptation could not fan it to a flame. Is it not because men love themselves better than their neighbors that they commit murder? It is clear to everyone that it must be so. Therefore it is the failure of the affections to work accurately, which leads men to the commission of this terrible deed. An evil nature sits by the fireside, and murders men in thought, and hurls daggers at them in the house in words, because it is evil, self-loving, and vile.

The inventory next mentions acts of *unchastity*. Men would never fall into evil lusts if it were not that they are dear to their hearts. Because these things are sweet to the heart, therefore men follow them. If the ox drinks water, it is because the ox thirsts; and if man goes after vice, it is because his soul longs after it. Those who never indulged in these actions may yet have meditated upon them, and in such a case the heart has committed uncleanness before God. So also the injuring of others by *theft* is from the heart. Is it not, again, because we love ourselves better than God, and better than others, that we are tempted to covet and led from covetousness to acts of dishonesty? And when it comes to the bearing of *false witness,* what is this again but an intense lie of one's own proper being, and a lack of love to our neighbors and our God? When the list closes with *blasphemy*, what is this but the heart setting itself up higher than God, and then seeking to tread God beneath its feet by the use of opprobrious and wicked epithets concerning Him? The heart is at the bottom of it all. There would be no murder, no fornication, there could be no blasphemy, if the heart were pure and right; if God were loved first and foremost, these offenses could not occur; but the heart is mischievous, and therefore these things exist.

The Savior does not stop to prove that these things come out of the heart; He asserts it, and asserts it because it is self-evident. When you see a thing coming forth, you are clear it was there first. Last summer I noticed hornets continually flying from a number of decayed logs in my garden; I saw them constantly flying in and out, and I did not think myself at all unreasonable in concluding that there was a hornet's nest there; I suppose that was the inference which everybody would have drawn. If we see the hornets of sin flying out of a man, we suppose at once that there is sin within him. Look at yonder spring; it is bubbling up with cool and fresh water; do you not conclude that somewhere or other there is a reservoir of this water from which it rises? If you did not conclude so, you would be so unreasonable that you might be the common butt of laughter; and when we know that all sorts of evil thoughts and murders, and lustful desires come from men's hearts, it is not at all a difficult conclusion that they must be in men; and inasmuch as all men, more or less, fall into these displays of sin, we conclude that there is in all men a great storehouse of sin, a secret fountain of sin, a mass of inward evil from which outward evil proceeds.

If this needed any sustaining at all I might offer these few observations, namely, *that nobody ever needs any training to commit sin.* Albeit there may be schools of virtue, there is certainly no necessity to open a school for vice. Your child will have evil thoughts without your sending him to a diabolical infant school; lads who have never seen the act of theft, or children who have been brought up in the midst of honesty, will

be found guilty of little thefts early enough in life. Lying and false witness, which is one form of lying, is so common that perhaps to find a tongue which never did bear false witness would be to find a tongue that never spoke; is this caused by education or by nature? It is so common a thing that even where the ear has heard nothing but the most rigid truth, children learn to lie and men learn to lie and commonly do lie and love to tell an evil tale against their fellow men whether it is true or not, bearing false witness with an eagerness which is perfectly shocking. Is this a matter of education, or is it a depraved heart? Some men will willfully invent a slanderous lie, knowing that they need not take any special care of their offspring, for they may lay it in the street and the first passerby will take it up and nurse it, and the lie will be carried in triumph round the world; whereas a piece of truth which would have done honor to a good man's character, will be left to be forgotten till God shall remember it at the Day of Judgment. You never need educate any man into sin. As soon as ever the young crocodile has left its shell, it begins to act just like its parent, and bites at the stick which broke the shell. The serpent is scarcely born before it rears itself and begins to hiss. The young tiger may be nurtured in your parlor, but it will develop before long the same thirst for blood as if it were in the forest. So is it with man; he sins as naturally as the young lion seeks blood, or the young serpent stores up venom. Sin is in his very nature that taints his inmost soul.

What is worse, it is certain that *men sin under all conceivable circumstances.* You have heard much romance about unsophisticated nature: it used to be a theory that the untutored savage saw God in every cloud and heard Him in the wind. But when travelers go to see these model untutored savages, what miserable specimens of humanity they are! The very philosophers who once set them up as being models change their minds, and tell us that they are a connecting link between man and the ape. This is what unsophisticated nature becomes. The ragtags of conventionalism are taken away, the tricks of commerce are removed, and the child of Nature is brought up naked, and a very pretty child he is! Let those who admire him live with him, and see if the very brutes do not shame him. The character of the uncivilized man is generally such that it were impossible for us to describe it in your hearing, so degraded and so debased is savage man. Is he not better, however, if he is highly educated? I suppose there was no nation of antiquity more highly educated than the Greeks, and yet if history is credited the private characters of her best philosophers such as Socrates and Solon, were stained with vices revolting to the mind. In modern times there has been ample proof that neither ignorance nor learning are an effectual check to sin. The fool learns sin without his books, and the scholar learns it none the less with all his lore. One of the most educated nations of modern times is India, and what is the moral character of the Hindu? Those who have been among the Hindus never dare to tell all that they have seen, and missionaries inform us in a whisper that what they have seen in the temples where the Hindus meet for worship, and where surely the better parts of their nature ought to be seen in the presence of their gods, is so utterly obscene that it is degrading to the mind to know that such a thing exists.

"Yes," you say, "some races are vicious both when trained under a certain civilization and when left uncivilized; but how about *Christian* civilization?" Why, the so-called Christians are scarcely any better. A man with religion is not any better than a man without it unless that religion changes his heart and makes a new man of him. The heart under a Christian's coat is as vile as that under a Bushman's sheepskin unless Divine Grace has renewed it. If you take a child and tutor him in all the outward observances of our own holy faith, if you shall see that in everything he is brought up after the straightest sect that your judgment shall select, yet unless the Holy Spirit shall come and give him a new heart and a right spirit his heart will find out ways of showing its sin, put it under what restraint you will. No, it has been notorious that some who were brought up with Puritan rigidity have been the most vicious in later life, and those who have not been so have become what is almost as detestable—hypocritical pretenders to a religion to whose real power they are strangers. "You must be born-again," is a Truth of God which is as true in the Hottentot's kraal as it is in the midst of this congregation, and as true in the home of piety as it is in the haunt of vice. The old nature everywhere, wash it, and cleanse it, and bind it, and curb it, and bridle it, is still the old fallen nature, and cannot understand spiritual things. You may take the man and treat him as they did the demoniac of old, you may bind him with chains, you may seek to tame him down, but when the old evil spirit comes up again he snaps the bonds of morality and rushes away to one form of sin or another—either to the outward excess of his carnal passions, or else to the equally vicious excess of hypocrisy, formalism and self-conceit.

These things may surely strengthen this Truth of God. Man sins in every place, in every shape; and yet more, *he sins after he knows the mischief of sin.* As the moth flies into the candle after singeing its wings, so man will fly into sin after he knows the bitterness of it. If he reforms as to one sin he takes up another, till he does no better for himself than Dr. Watts's fever patient, of whom he says—

"It is a poor relief we gain,
To shift the place and keep the pain."

They do so; they give up, perhaps, drunkenness. What then? Why then they become self-righteous. If you can drive a man from outward vice, how far have you improved him if he lives in inward sin? You have benefited him as far as the sight of man is concerned, but not before God. There was a man killed on Holborn Hill this week, and I have heard that there was little or no external appearance of injury upon his body. He had been crushed between an omnibus and a cart, and all the wounds were internal, but he died just as surely as if he had been beaten black and blue, or cut in a thousand pieces. So a man may die of internal sin; it does not appear outwardly for certain reasons, but he will die of it just the same if it is within. Many a man has died from internal bleeding, and yet there has been no wound whatever to be seen by the eyes. You, my dear Hearer, may go to Hell as well dressed in the garnishing of morality as in the rags of immorality. Unless the very center of your soul and the core of your being are made obedient to the living God He will not accept

you, for He looks not only to your outward actions, but to your heart's secret loyalty or treachery towards Himself.

Man sins, moreover—to close this very fearful impeachment against manhood—man sins not as the result of mistaken intellect, but as the result of his heart being vile. When a man sins by mistake, does not know it to be sin, when he sins thinking that he is doing right; as soon as he gets to know his error he forsakes the sin with horror, and flies to God with repentance; but this is never done by men naturally—the natural heart of man, if it finds out sin to be sin, very frequently feels all the more delight in it, just as the Apostle Paul says he had not known lust unless the Law had said, "You shall not covet." Our corrupt nature loves forbidden fruit. Some people would not care to work on Sunday unless they had been commanded to rest; many would never care to go to the Crystal Palace on any day in the week, but they crave to go on Sunday simply because it is forbidden. Some fellows are lazy enough on Monday, and make a saint's day of it, and yet Sunday rest they oppose with all their might. It is strange that what God makes common man wants to make special; what God makes special, man wants to make common. As soon as ever a child is told he must not do such a thing, although he had never thought of doing it before, he wants to do it now. That is the nature of us. "When the Commandment came," says the Apostle, "sin revived, and I died." This is not the Law's fault, but ours. Cool water thrown upon unslaked lime produces a burning heat; it is not the fault of the water that the heat is produced, the lime alone is to blame. So the very command of God, "You shall not do this," or "You shall not do that," leads man into sin, and so it proves the innate and thorough viciousness of the nature of man.

"I do not like it," says one. "I do not like to hear human nature spoken so evil of." And do you suppose I like to speak of it in this way? It is no more pleasing to me than to you. "Well, but," says one, "I believe in the dignity of human nature." Believe in it, my dear Man, and try and prove it if you can! Nobody will be more glad than I shall be to see any true dignity in anybody. But why do we speak like this? Why, because our solemn conviction is that we speak the truth. We thus speak because we believe the Word of God teaches it; and, moreover, we know by sorrowful experience that if the charge is not true of others, it is certainly true of us. We have been preserved from known outward sin, but we have to mourn over the terrible evils of our heart; and being willing to endorse the indictment, and personally to plead guilty, we are the more confident in bringing it forward and saying, "This is the case with the whole race of man, without a single exception; they must all stand guilty before God." Not one heart by nature is right with God; Jew and Gentile are all under sin—"We are all gone out of the way, we are altogether become unprofitable: there is none that does good, no not one."

II. We shall now turn aside to notice THE TRUTHS WHICH ARE CONNECTED WITH THIS HUMBLING FACT.

First, observe that receiving our Lord's testimony concerning our hearts, that they have become dens of evil, that out of them comes evil thoughts, fornication, theft, and so on, we are driven to believe in *the Doctrine of the Fall.* If we are in this state, it is inconceivable that God

should have made us so. A pure and holy Being must have been the creator of pure and holy beings. As Job said, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." We may reverse the question and ask, "How could an unclean thing come out of a clean thing?" The Holy God must be the Parent of holy children, and when God made manhood He must have made it perfect, otherwise He did not act according to His own Nature. It remains a marvelous riddle how man is what he is till you turn to this Book, and when you read the story of the Fall the riddle is all solved. Then we see how that first parent of ours, who stood for us as our representative, sinned, and by that sin tainted the whole race, so that we, being born of him, are born in his image and in his likeness, and he being a rebel we are born rebels, he being a traitor we are born traitors, too. "Behold," says David, "I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." There is the root of the matter. It is not by God's making that we are sinful, it is by Adam's unmaking of us and ruining of us that we come to be what we are, inheritors of original sin and corruption. If it shall be asked, "How is this great mystery still further to be explained, and the justice of it proved?" We answer, that these are things too deep and too high for us, that we think we can see the justice of it, and we have sometimes admired the mercy of it, too; but, nevertheless, we are not accustomed to dispute facts we cannot understand, but to believe them if God reveals them; and since it is revealed that by one man's transgression many were made sinners, we believe it, and raise no further question. We must leave the fact as a fact, feeling that it is a great deep.

You ask an explanation of this, and refuse to believe till you understand; we are obliged to refer you to all other things in Nature which at the bottom must be matters of faith rather than of reason. There are ten thousand mysteries in Nature which you know are there, but which you cannot understand. You cannot even tell me what electricity is, nor what is the attraction of gravitation. There are these forces, for you see their effects, but how the forces first began you know not; and here is a great force which is in mankind, the force of evil, and you see its effects everywhere, but how it came there you could not have told unless God had said it came there through inheritance from your parents as the result of the Fall of Adam, and there you must leave it and bow your heads. Only let this be remembered, if you would prefer every one of you to have stood or fallen for yourselves, it is more than probable you would have fallen, and if you had fallen, you would have fallen forever; for the devils, angels as they once were, stood every one upon his own footing; when, therefore, the angels fell and became devils, they could never be saved—they were left forever to perish; but because we fell in another, and did not fall in the first place in our own persons, it became possible to restore us by the merits of Another, and we have been restored in the Person of the Lord Jesus, so that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus is delivered from the Fall of Adam, and saved through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. The way by which we are ruined was such a way that there was a possibility of our being rescued from it, but had we been ruined by our own actual sin at the commencement, it is probable our ruin would have been like that of those evil spirits for whom are reserved chains of

fire and the blackness of darkness forever. This Doctrine, then, of the evil character of man necessitates the belief in the Fall.

In the next place, this Doctrine shows *the need of a new nature.* There is a young man here who says, "I mean to lead a perfectly pure and holy life. I resolve to serve God." Now should we dissuade such a man from the attempt? By no means. It has been sometimes said that we speak against morality. Never, never a word against it; but we have spoken against the attempt being made to produce purity from impurity, and we have said that such a nature as ours needs renewing before it will be holy. If it shall be said that we speak against navigation because we say that leaky vessels are not fit to put to sea, we are content that fools should so judge us; on the contrary, we hold that we are speaking for the true art of navigation when we say to the man with his water-logged vessel, "You must find another ship if you would navigate a boisterous ocean." Young man, you wish to be holy and pure, then remember that if your heart is full of theft, murder, adultery, and so on, it will always be seeking to come forth from you in word and act, and your utmost endeavors will not be able to utterly restrain the outcoming of that which is there, according to Christ's Word. You had better, then, instead of beginning in your *own* strength, stop awhile and count the cost. What if you could get a new heart and a right spirit? What if that nature of yours could be changed? What if the Divine One who made Adam perfect should make you anew? What if He should drop into you a new spark of life of a higher order than that which now possesses you?

Then you would have a nature as inclined to holiness as your present nature tends to sin. Then you would, by force of a new nature, follow after that which is right, as you now naturally follow after that which is evil. "Oh," you say, "is this possible?" Possible? It is the Gospel of our salvation! We tell you that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved; and the process of salvation consists in part of the implantation of a new nature. By trusting in Jesus you come to love Him, and the love of Him, by the power of the Divine Spirit, becomes a master passion, a new heart, by which you war with your old passions, trample them under foot, and subdue them. As soon as you clearly see in your soul, by the Holy Spirit, that Jesus loved you, and gave Himself for you, your heart sings—

"Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His Cross."

Then you have a new Object for your love; instead of loving self, you love God in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, and that new love becomes to you the heart which overcomes the old corruption, and prompts you to walk in holiness and in the fear of God all your days. Oh, young Man, go not forth to this warfare till you have considered the charges. As good men as you have sought to fight with sin, and have found its arm too strong for them. Come to the Cross and ask the Savior who fought Himself with temptation and overcame it, ask Him to cleanse you from your past sins in His precious blood; ask Him to let His Divine Spirit, who is the Great Regenerator, enter into you, and make you a new creature; and

when you are a new creature then there shall be the new longings, the new hopes, the new fears, which shall enable you to follow a new course to the Glory of God. If your heart is evil, you must get a new heart or you cannot be holy.

Do you not see how necessary it is that we should be regenerate or made new creatures, because such a heart as ours cannot possibly enter into Heaven? If the natural heart is a great barracks of evil, a sort of city with a hundred gates from which black warriors of sin are continually streaming, how can such an abomination as that ever pass through the pearly gates and be where God is, before the Eternal Throne? O Sirs, these hearts of ours, these depraved affections must be slain; they must be crucified with Christ, they must be conquered, put down, stamped out, or how can we be where Jesus is? Who can do this but the Holy Spirit? He can do it, He can do it now, He can put into you a new heart which will begin fighting with this old heart at once, which will go on fighting with it as long as you live—contending, struggling, wrestling, till at last it will drive the old loves out; your affections will no more be set on self and on evil things, but you will become as pure as God is pure, because God Himself has renewed you in the spirit of your mind. Then you shall enter Heaven, then you shall dwell with angels, then you shall see God because you have been made perfectly like God by the work of the Holy Spirit. Reverence and esteem, dear Hearers, that blessed Spirit who can make new creatures of us. Pray to Him that the old man may die in us, that it may be crucified daily; that the old nature may be buried in the tomb of the Savior, and that a new heart and right spirit in us may continually gather strength and force till they shall come to their ultimate perfection, and we shall enter into our rest.

There is another Doctrine which receives also very great strength from this Truth of God. If man's heart is nothing but a source of blackness and sin, *admire the Divine Grace of God.* What could have led the Lord to save such creatures as we have described if they are indeed such creatures? What but Sovereign Grace could look on such wretches? Those who give glory to human merit always try to puff up human nature by speaking in its praise, but we who believe human nature to be utterly fallen and debased. We admire the wonderful Kindness and matchless Goodness of God, that He should ever have set His Love upon such unworthy creatures. Paul is in admiration of it when he says, "His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." A heart full of evil thoughts, and yet He loved me! A heart full of fornication and adultery, and yet He loved me! A heart full of murder, and yet He loved me! A heart that could bear false witness, a heart that could blaspheme, and yet He loved us! O Brothers and Sisters, if we could see ourselves as God saw us in the Fall, we should wonder how the eyes of Infinite Purity could have borne with us, how the heart of Infinite Love could have set itself upon us. You were not loved because of your goodness, you were not chosen because of anything in you that was lovely and amiable, you were loved because He would love you; you were chosen because He would do it for His name's sake—

"He saw you ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved you notwithstanding all;

He saved you from your lost estate,
His Loving Kindness, oh how great!"

Why, Beloved, it must be Sovereign Grace from top to bottom. Grace must be the Alpha, Grace must be the Omega. If this is the true state of the case I do not wonder that so many kick against the Doctrine of Election and the kindred Doctrines of Grace when they have such a high opinion of themselves; but if God would make them see their own hearts then they would cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And then they would understand that if ever a man is saved, it is not by his own doing or his own willing, but by Divine Grace alone. It is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy, for He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. The Sovereignty of God would become an easy Doctrine to believe if we felt the depravity of our own hearts; if we saw ourselves as in the glass of Scripture, and abhorred ourselves in dust and ashes, then instead of having any claims upon God we would say, "Let Him do as seems good to Him," and make our appeal not to His Justice but to His unfathomable Mercy, crying, "According to the multitude of Your loving kindnesses and Your tender mercies blot out my iniquities."

Yet once again, how this Doctrine illustrates *the Doctrine of the Atonement.* Brothers and Sisters, sin defiles us most horribly; its act defiles our character, but its essence has ruined our nature. It appears from Christ's statement that we are defiled internally as well as outwardly, that sin is not only an eruption as it were upon the skin, but it is in the center of our nature. Behold, then, the need of the precious blood and admire its wonderful potency! The blood of God's own dear Son which streamed on Calvary's accursed tree cleanses us in our inner man. O matchless blood! O marvelous purification! Come here, Sinner; though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool, and though your heart itself is even more scarlet than your actions, He can cleanse your heart as well as your life. Christ can cleanse the fountain and the stream, too; He can remove the external leprosy, and heal the internal leprosy, also; both root and branch He bears away. O Souls, admire and wonder; bow down with tears streaming from your eyes, and then look up with gladness to the Son of God made flesh, crucified for sinners, for whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Come, you black-hearted! Come, you defiled and ruined sons of Adam! Come, you who are perishing at the gates of Hell shut out from hope! Come, you who like the men of Zebulun and Naphtali sit in darkness and in the valley of the Shadow of Death. Come and trust Christ, and He will send His Spirit upon you, and give you new hearts and right spirits; from all your iniquities will He cleanse you, He will be the new Creator, for He sits on the Throne this day, and He says, "Behold, I make all things new."

Oh that Jesus may make some new who are here this morning! I have laid the axe at the root of the tree; and every tree that is here must be cut down and cast into the fire, unless Christ changes the nature of that tree, and makes it bring forth fruit unto righteousness. I have tried to show that man is utterly ruined in himself; that he has become like the ruins of Babylon where hideous dragons and all manner of loathsome creatures dwell. I will even liken him to the troubled sea, whose waters

cast up mire and dirt, where Satan dwells as a leviathan, and with him innumerable creeping things, things obscene and horrible. I have tried, as far as I could, to preach the old unfashionable Truth of God, and I expect to be hated for so doing; but now over all there comes the proclamation of mercy—that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their iniquities; and whoever believes in Him shall be delivered from the mischief of the Fall, and lifted to dwell where God is, in perfect purity and happiness.

What a wonder is this choice mercy, that a den of dragons should become a Temple of the Holy Spirit! What a wonder that the heart, through which blasphemy raged, should become a soul in which Divine Grace reigns! That the profane mouth should become the organ of holy song! Oh what a thousand wonders, that that black heap of human nature, that dunghill of the heart, should yet be made pure as alabaster, glittering in holy light, and bright with Heaven, shining like pure gold, like transparent glass; and that the Holy Spirit Himself should agree to dwell where the devil dwelt! "Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?" What wonder! Once they were the temples of lust, of anger, of evil speaking, of blasphemy; and yet they can be, and I trust now are, the Temples of the Holy Spirit. Oh marvelous! Marvelous! Let us bless God, and ask that we may realize in ourselves this wondrous miracle to the praise and glory of His Grace, where He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
MATTHEW 15:1-20.**

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

**By the Grace of God, for all 63 volumes of
C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and
more than 500 Spanish translations, visit:
www.spurgeongems.org**

UNSTAGGERING FAITH
NO. 733

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 3, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform." Romans 4:19-21.

IT was God's purpose that Abraham should be a surpassingly excellent example of the power of faith. He was to be "the father of the faithful," the mirror, pattern and paragon of faith. He was ordained to be the supreme believer of the patriarchal age, the serene and venerable leader of the noble army of believers in Jehovah, the faithful and true God. In order to produce so eminent a character, it was necessary that Abraham's faith should be exercised in a special and unequalled manner. The power of his faith could not be known except by putting it to the severest tests. To this end, among other trials of his faith, God gave him a promise that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed, and yet for many a year he remained without an heir. The promise, when originally given, startled Abraham, but he did not doubt it. We read that he laughed, laughed with holy joy at the thought of so great and unexpected a blessing. It also startled his wife Sarah; she did, however, doubt it—and when she laughed it was the laugh of disbelief. The fulfillment of the promise was long delayed. Abraham waited with patience, sojourning as a stranger in a strange land, having respect unto the covenant which the Lord had made with him and with his unborn seed. Not a shadow of doubt crossed the mind of the holy patriarch, he staggered not at the promise through unbelief, and though he came to be 100 years old, and his wife Sarah was almost equally as advanced in years, he did not listen to the voice of carnal reason, but maintained his confidence in God. Doubtless he had well weighed the natural impossibilities which laid in the way, but he overlooked the whole, and being fully persuaded that if God had promised him a son the son would certainly be born, he entertained a holy confidence, and left the matter of time in the hands of the sovereign ruler. His faith triumphed in all its conflicts. Had it not been that Sarah and Abraham were both at such an advanced age there would have been no credit to them in believing the promise of God, but the more difficult, the more impossible the fulfillment of the promise seemed

to be, the more wonderful was Abraham's faith, that he still held to it that what God had promised He was able to perform. If I may so say, there was in Abraham's case a double death to stand in the way of the promise, not one difficulty in itself insuperable, but two, two absolute impossibilities; and yet, though one impossibility might have been enough to stagger any man, the two together could not cause his faith to waver. He considered not the natural impediments; he allowed them no space in the account, they seemed to be less than nothing in the presence of the truth and power of the Almighty God. The Most High God had given a promise, and that fact overrode 10,000 adverse arguments. His was that noble confidence of which we sing—

"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to that alone;
Laughs at impossibilities
And cries, 'It shall be done!'"

By such unquestioning confidence Abraham brought glory to God. It glorifies God greatly for His servants to trust Him; they then become witnesses to His faithfulness, just as His works in creation are witnesses of His power and wisdom. Abraham was a noble instance of the power which the truthfulness of God exerts over the human mind, when under all discouragements he still "believed God." His heart said of the living God, "He cannot lie; He will perform His promise." While glorifying God, Abraham reaped a present consolation to himself, and in the end he had the joy of receiving the promise. His early laugh of joy was remembered and commemorated in his son Isaac, that child of promise, whose name was "laughter." The patriarch himself became one of the most honored of men, for it is written, "He who honors Me I will honor."

Brothers and sisters, this is the point to which I want to bring you, that if God intends to make you or me, any one of us, or all of us together, to be distinguishing exhibitors of the divine grace of faith, we must expect to be passed through very much the same trials as Abraham. With regard to the object upon which our faith is exercised, it is most probable that we shall be made to feel our own weakness and even our personal death; we shall be brought very low, even into an utter self-despair; we shall be made to see that the mercy we are seeking of God is a thing impossible with man; it is very probable that difficulties will rise before us till they are enough to overwhelm us, not only one range of mountainous impossibilities, but another will be seen towering up behind the first, till we are pressed beyond measure, and led to an utter despair of the matter as considered in ourselves. At such a crisis, if God the Holy Spirit is working with mighty power in us we shall still believe that the divine promise will be fulfilled; we shall not entertain a doubt concerning the promise; we shall remember that it remains with God to find ways and means and not with ourselves; we shall cast the burden of fulfilling the promise upon Him with whom it naturally rests. Go on,

then, in steady, holy, confident joy, looking for the end of our faith and patiently pleading until we reach it. The Lord will honor and comfort us in so doing, and in the end He will grant us the desire of our hearts, for none who trust in Him shall ever be confounded, world without end! Let us this morning firmly lay hold upon this general principle, that God will empty us of self completely before He will accomplish any great thing by us, thus removing from us every pretext for claiming the glory for ourselves; but at such seasons of humiliation it is our privilege to exercise unabated faith, for the fulfillment of the promise is not imperiled, but rather may be looked upon as drawing near. May the Holy Spirit guide us while we endeavor to apply the general principle to distinct cases.

First, we shall view it in application *to the individual worker for Christ;* then, secondly, we shall take it *in connection with the church associated for Christian service;* thirdly, we shall apply it briefly to the case of *a pleader wrestling with God in prayer;* and, fourthly, we shall show its bearing upon the case of *a seeker,* showing that he also will have to feel his own natural death and utter helplessness, and then faith will find all necessary grace stored up in the promise-Giving God.

I. TO THE INDIVIDUAL WORKER we have a message.

I trust I address many brothers and sisters who have wholly consecrated themselves to the service of God, and have been for months or years perseveringly toiling in the Redeemer's cause. Now, it is probable, very probable indeed, that you are more than ever conscious of your own spiritual weakness. "Oh," you say, "if God intends to bless souls, I cannot see how they can be blessed through me. If sinners are to be converted, I feel myself to be the most unfit and unworthy instrument to be used by God in the whole world. If He shall be pleased to smile upon the endeavors of some evangelist, or a pastor, or a zealous Christian, I shall be very grateful, and not at all surprised; but if He should ever bless me it will be a most astonishing thing, I would scarcely be able to believe my own eyes." Such a lowly sense of our own unfitness is common even at the beginning of real Christian labor, and arises from the unexpected and novel difficulties with which we are surrounded. We are then unused to Christian labor, and whether we have to speak in public or to plead with individual sinners we do not feel at home with the work at first, and are oppressed with a sense of weakness. We have not gone this way before, and being quite new at the work, Satan whispers, "You are a poor creature to pretend to serve God. Go back to your retirement, and leave this service to better men." Dear friends, who are thus tempted, take comfort from the word this morning. It is necessary to any great blessing that you should feel your weakness, and see death written upon all carnal strength; this is a part of your preparation for great usefulness; you must be made to feel early in the work, if you are to have an early blessing, that all the glory must be of God; your fancied excellence must fade

away, and you yourself must become in your own esteem as feeble as a little child.

I think, however, that a sense of weakness grows on the Christian worker. To continue in harness year after year is not without its wear and tear; our spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak, and faintness in pursuing reveals to us that our own strength is perfect weakness. Personally, I feel my own spiritual inability much more strongly than I did when I began to preach the gospel. There was a novelty and an excitement then about the exercise which gave a degree of counterfeit facility in it; but now it comes almost every day in the week, twice each day, and this constant utterance, the proclamation of the same gospel, finds out the weak joints in our armor. One is not weary of it, thank God, but still there is a languor which creeps over us, and the old novelty and flash which apparently helped us is now gone, and we feel much more vividly than at first that without the energy of the Holy Spirit we can do nothing, absolutely nothing. You experienced Sunday school teachers, and you parents seeking the conversion of your children are, I doubt not, much more conscious now that all your strength must come from above than you once were. You held as a sort of orthodox creed that you were nothing, but now you feel that you are less than nothing; the more earnest your labors for the Lord, the clearer will be your sense of your own nothingness.

There are times when a lack of success or a withering of our cherished hopes will help to make us feel most keenly how barren and unfruitful we are until the Lord endows us with His Spirit. Those whom we thought to be converted turn out to be merely the subjects of transient excitement, those who stood long, and for years appeared to honor the cross of Christ, turn aside and pierce us through with many sorrows, and then we cry out, “Woe is me! How shall I speak any more in the name of the Lord?” Like Moses, we would have the Lord send by whomever He would send, but not by us; or like Elijah, we hide ourselves for fear, and say “Let me die, I am no better than my fathers.” I suppose there is no successful worker who is quite free from times of deep depression, times when his fears make him say, “Surely I took up this work myself through presumption, I ran without being called; I have willfully thrust myself into a position where I am subject to great danger and great toil, without having the strength which is required for the place.” At such moments, it only needs another push from Satan, a little withdrawing of God’s hand, to make us like Jonah go down to Joppa, and see if we can find a ship to take us away to Tarshish, that we may no longer bear the burden of the Lord. My brother, my sister, I am not sorry if you are passing through this fiery ordeal. If your strength is dried up like a potsherd, if your strength is shriveled like a skin-bottle that has been hanging up in the smoke, if you feel as though your personal power was altogether para-

lyzed, I do not regret it, for know you not that it is in your weakness God will show His own strength, and when there is an end of you there will be a beginning of Him? When you are brought to feel, "Neither have I any strength, nor know I what to do," then will you lift up your eyes to the strong One, from whom comes all your true help, and then will His mighty arm be made bare.

In laying down the general principle drawn from the text we observed that there existed a double difficulty, and that even this did not abate Abraham's confidence. It may be that a sense of our own unworthiness is not our only discouragement, but that our sphere of Christian effort is remarkably unpromising. You did not know, my dear friend, when you commenced your evangelistic efforts, how hard the human heart was. You were like young Melanchthon—you thought you could easily conquer the human heart, but you now discover that old Adam is too strong for young Melanchthon. You had heard of other brothers who preached or taught without success, and you said to yourselves, "There must be something very wrong in them or in their teaching, I will not fall into their errors; I at least will be wise and discreet; my methods shall be more Christ-like, more suitable, and more effective; I shall surely win souls." But now you find that hearts with you are as hard as hearts with other men. In that little Sunday school class of yours the boys are still obstinate, the girls still frivolous. You had not reckoned upon this. You accepted it as matter of doctrine that they were depraved, but you supposed that under your treatment that depravity would soon disappear. You are disappointed, for the children seem even worse than others. The more you try to influence their hearts the less you succeed, and the more earnest your endeavors to bring them to Jesus, the more it seems the sin that dwells in them is provoked. It is possible that you are called to labor where the prejudices of the people are against the gospel, where the temptations and habits and ways of thought are all dead against the chance of success. We constantly meet with brothers who say, "I could prosper anywhere else, but I cannot succeed where I now am." Perhaps they complain, "It is a population of working men," and this they look upon as a dreadful evil, whereas I believe that no class will better reward the labors of the earnest preacher of the gospel. Or else they say, "They are all rich people, and I cannot get at them," whereas where there is a will there is a way. Or the neighborhood is subject to the influence of some established church, or all taken up with other congregations; there is sure to be found difficulty, and Christian work never does

The fact is, to save a soul is the work of Deity, to turn the human will towards holiness is the work of Omnipotence; and unless you and I have made up our minds to that, we had better go back to retirement and meditation, for we are not ready for labor. You tell me your particular sphere is one in which you can do nothing; I am glad to hear it. Such is

mine; such is the true position of every Christian worker; he is called by God to do impossibilities; he is but a worm, and yet he is to thresh the mountains and beat them small. Will he do it? Yes, that he will, if his faith is equal to the work. If God but enables him to call in divine Strength, the absence of human strength will be gain to him, and the difficulties and impossibilities will only be as a platform upon which God shall be uplifted, and God's strength the better displayed. Settle it in your heart, my dear friend, that there is great labor to be accomplished if souls are to be won; and in that class, or that tract distributing, that hamlet, that preaching station, there is a work quite out of your reach, and if you do not enlist the power of a heavenly arm, you will come back and say, "I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nothing." It is well for you to know it. Here are you without power, and the work cannot help you, will not help you, it will bring every obstacle to impede you. You without strength and the work more than human, see your position and be prepared for it.

Yet the godly worker has that which sustains him, for he has a promise from God. Abraham had received a promise. "In you and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Grasping this with a tight hold, he knew the difficulties and weighed them; but having done so, he put them away as not worth considering. God had said it, and that was enough for him. To him the promise of God was as good as the fulfillment. Just as in trade you often consider some men's bills to be as good as cash, so in this case God's promise was as good to Abraham as the fulfillment itself. Now, brother, if you and I are to be successful in our work for God, we too must get hold of a promise. I think I hear you say, "If I heard a heavenly voice saying to me, 'Go and labor, and I will give you success,' I should doubt no more. If I could have a special revelation, just as Abraham had to him, personally, that would alter the case; but I have not received such a special promise, and am therefore full of fear." Now, observe, God gives His promises in many ways. Sometimes He gives them to individuals, at other times to classes of character; and which is the better of the two? I think you should prefer the second. Suppose God had given to you personally a promise, your unbelief would say, "Ah, it is all fancy; it was not the Lord, it was only a dream." But now God has been pleased to give the revelation, in your case, to character. Shall I quote it? Here it is: "He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Now is not that yourself? Your name is not there, but your *character* is, for you have gone forth, you have wept, and you have carried forth precious seed! The Lord declares that such an one shall doubtless come again rejoicing!

Now, although your name is not in the book absolutely, it is there virtually, and the promise is just as sure to you. If any man of honor were

to issue a promise that all persons appearing at his door at such an hour should receive relief, if he did not give relief to all who appeared, he would be quite as guilty of breach of promise as though he had picked out all the persons by name and given them the promise. The promise is not affected by the absence of the name if the character is there described. I will give you another promise of God: "My word shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, it shall prosper in the thing where I sent it." Have you delivered God's word, my dear friend? There is the question. If you have, then God declares it shall not return unto Him void; it shall prosper in the thing where He sent it; and that promise is quite as good as though your particular initials had been affixed to it, or it had been spoken to you by the voice of an angel in the visions of the night! A promise, however given is equally binding upon a man of honor, and a promise from God, no matter how delivered, is sure of fulfillment; all you have to do is to lay hold upon it. I have gone forth weeping, and I have sown precious seed, therefore God says I shall come again rejoicing, bringing my sheaves with me. I cannot create the sheaves, and the sheaves as yet do not appear in the field, but I shall have them, for what God has promised He is able also to perform. The thing is to get a promise distinctly and clearly before your mind's eye, and then to defy all discouragements. Oh my brothers, may you be so weak that you may be as dead, and yet at the same time may you be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, because your faith has made the omnipotence of God to be at your command.

Abraham having his full conviction that God would fulfill His own promise, was happy about it, cheerful, rejoicing, comforted, feeling as content to wait as he would have been to receive the blessing at once. He was always full of sacred joy, and thus always glorified God; for those who saw the holy patriarch's serenity of mind naturally inquired who was his God, and when they heard of the Most High they glorified the God of Abraham. In due season the promise came, and the patriarchal tent was glad with a gladness which never left it. Abraham spoke well of his God, and his God dealt well with him. I want you, Christian workers, to seek as before God to tread in the steps of Abraham. While fully aware that you are powerless in yourselves, rest upon the promise of God; go to your work counting no risks, making no calculations, but believing that where God's promise is concerned, the bare suspicion of failure is not to be endured. Perhaps next to Abraham there was not, in the olden times, a man of more childlike faith than Samson. One weeps over his many infirmities, but one admires the marvelous simplicity of his dependence upon God. When a thousand foes are in array against him he never calculates; he is all alone, unarmed and bound with cords; he snaps his bonds, and seizing the jawbone of an ass, he flies at the hosts of the armed men as if he had a thousand helpers, and they but an equal

match for him, and heaps upon heaps he dashes them down till he cries, "With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass have I slain a thousand men." He was a man who, if God had said, "Shoulder the world like Atlas," would have carried it as readily as he did the gates of Gaza. He had no thought but of God's power and he was reckless of danger when he felt that God was with him. See him in that memorable death-deed, see him taking hold of the pillars after he had been left of God, blind, and shut up in prison all those dreary months; he has even now enough confidence in God to believe that He will help him at the last! Depend upon it, brothers and sisters it is great faith that can believe in God after times of desertion. But look! He puts his hands upon those ponderous pillars; he prays, and then he tugs and strains; down, down they come, and Israel's God is avenged upon Israel's foe!

That is the kind of spirit I should like to get into my own soul; a spirit conscious that it can do nothing alone, conscious that the work is beyond human possibility, but equally clear that it can do everything that through God there is nothing beyond the range of its capacity.

II. Dear friends, members of this church, I need your earnest attention while I try to show the bearing of this upon THIS CHURCH AND EVERY CHURCH IN A SIMILAR CONDITION.

We have set our hearts upon a thorough revival of religion in our midst. Some of my brothers associated with me in the deaconship and eldership have made this a matter of constant prayer to God, that we may see this year greater things than we have ever seen, and there are many in the membership of the same mind who have besieged the throne of God with constant applications. It will be, as a preparation for the work which God will work among us, a very blessed thing for us as a church to feel how utterly powerless we are in this matter. God has blessed us these 13 years; we have enjoyed continued prosperity; we have scarcely known what to do with the blessing God has given us. Truly in our case He has fulfilled the promise, "I will pour out My blessing upon you so that you shall not have room to receive it." But I fear that our temptation is to lean upon an arm of flesh, to suppose there is some power in the ministry, or in our organization, or in the zeal which has characterized us. Brothers and sisters, let us divest ourselves of all that pride, that detestable, abominable, soul-weakening vice, which is as evil and as hurtful to us as it is abominable to God. We can no more save a soul than make a world, and as to causing a genuine revival by our own efforts, we might as well talk of whirling the stars from their sphere! Poor helpless worms we are in this matter. If God helps us we can pray, but without His aid our prayer will be mockery. If God helps us we can preach, but apart from Him our preaching is but a weary tale told without power or energy. You must each of you ask the Lord to take you down into the depths of your own nothingness, and reveal to you your

utter unworthiness to be used in His work. Try to get a deeply humiliating sense of your own weakness. As a church we want to be kept low before the Lord. Why what are we as a church? There are some sad sinners among us, who are such clever hypocrites that we cannot find them out, and there are others who walk so ill that we fear they are tares among the wheat. The best of us are far from being as good as we should be. We have all grave accusations to bring against ourselves. If the Lord Jesus were to write on the ground here and say, "He that is without fault among you, let him throw the first stone at lukewarm Christians," I do not know who is the oldest and whether he would try to go out first, but I should follow very closely at his heels. We are all verily guilty before the Lord; we have not done as we ought, nor as we might—we are unworthy that He should use us, and if He should write, "Ichabod," in letters of fire over this Tabernacle, and leave this house to be desolate as Shiloh was of old, He might well do it and none could blame Him. Let us all confess this.

Next, there is not only difficulty in ourselves but difficulty in the work. We want to see all these people converted to God, and truly some of our hearers are hopeless enough, for I have been preaching to them for 10 or 12 years and they are not a whit the better but the worse for it—they have grown gospel-hardened. My voice used to startle you once, and the honest truth of God made you feel, but it is not so now. You are as used to my voice as the miller to the click of his mill; you are made ready for the uttermost wrath of God, for there is no place that can prepare a man for Hell so readily as the place of rejected invitations and neglected admonitions. Yet, dear hearers, we desire to see you converted, and by the grace of God we hope to see it. But what can *we* do? The preacher can do nothing, for he has done his best to bring you to Christ and has failed, and all that any of our most earnest friends can suggest will fail also. The work is impossible with us, but do we therefore give up the attempt? No, for is it not written, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you My face in vain"? We cannot seek God's face in vain, and if this church continues to pray as it has done an answer of peace must be given us. We do not know how the promise is to be fulfilled, but we believe it will be fulfilled, and we leave it with our God. There is another promise, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." Christ must see of His soul's travail, must see of it in this place too. We expect to see men, women, and children converted in this place, and to hear multitudes of sinners crying, "What must I do to be saved?" We have God's promise for it; *we* cannot do it, but *He* can. What shall we do? Why, just in joyous confidence continue steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Go again to our knees in prayer, feeling that the result is not haphazard. Jesus pleads His wounds, and cannot be denied. The Lord cannot draw back from His Word. He must do according to His people's

desires when He Himself writes those desires upon their hearts, and when they have grown into earnest striving, and wrestling, and mounted into believing expectations, they must be fulfilled. If we can only get a dozen men and women among you really humbled before God to feel your own emptiness, and yet to believe the promise, I expect to see within the next few months a blessing of such an extent as we have never received before. God send this, and His be the glory!

III. For a minute—if there had been time I would have liked to apply this principle TO EVERY PLEADING SOUL that is wrestling with God in prayer, but as I have not the time I will dismiss it in these words. Dear friends, if your heart has been set upon any special object in prayer, if you have an express promise for it (and mark, that is indispensable), you must not be staggered if the objective of your desire seems farther off now than when you first began to pray. If even after months of supplication the thing should seem more difficult now of attainment than ever it was, wait at the mercy seat in the full persuasion that although God may take His time, and that time may not be your time, yet He must and will redeem His promise when the fullness of time has come. If you have prayed for the salvation of your child, or husband, or friend, and that person has grown worse instead of better, do not cease praying. If that dear little one has become more obstinate, and that husband even more profane, still God must be held to His word; and if you have the faith to challenge His attributes of faithfulness and power, assuredly He never did and never will let your prayers fall fruitless to the ground; and I repeat the word that you may be sure to carry that away with you, let not the fact that the answer seems farther off than ever be any discouragement to you. Remember that to trust God in the light is nothing—but to trust Him in the dark—that is faith. To rest upon God when everything witnesses with God is nothing, but to believe God when everything gives Him the lie—that is faith. To believe that all shall go well when outward providences blow softly is any fool's play, but to believe that it *must* and *shall* be well when storms and tempests are round about you, and you are blown farther and farther from the harbor of your desire—this is a work of divine grace. By this shall you know whether you are a child of God or not—by seeing whether you can exercise faith in the power of prayer when all things forbid you to hope.

IV. I desire to spend the last five minutes in addressing THE SEEKER. Surely among this throng there must be some of you who long to be saved. If so, it is likely that since you have begun to seek salvation, instead of being happier you are far more miserable. You imagined at one time that you could believe in Jesus whenever you liked, that you could become a Christian at your own will at any moment; and now you wake up to find that the will is present with you, but how to perform that which you desire you find not. You desire to break the chains of sin, but

those sins were far easier to bind than to loose. You want to come to Jesus with a broken heart, but your heart refuses to break. You long to trust Jesus, but your unbelief is so mighty that you cannot see His cross—you cannot look with the look which makes a sinner live. Will you think me cruel if I say I am glad to find you in this poverty-stricken state, for I believe that in your case you must *know* your own powerlessness, you *must* be brought to feel that as far as salvation is concerned you are dead, utterly dead. Every sinner must learn that he is by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and that the work of salvation is a work impossible to him—it is high above out of his reach. I want you to know that more and more, and if it should drive you to a thorough self-despair, none will be more thankful than I shall be, for despair is the nearest way to faith in our philosophy. Self-despair throws a man upon his God; he feels that he can do nothing and he turns to one who can do all things.

Now, friend, if you are as I have said convinced of your nothingness, the next thing is, can you find a promise? There is one I pray the Lord to give you this morning: "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Have you called upon the name of the Lord? That is to say, have you cried to Him, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? Well, if you have not, I pray you do it now. If you so call, you must be saved. True, you cannot save yourself; I am glad you know that; but what *you* cannot do, in that you are weak through the flesh, God will do, for there is His promise, "Whoever comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Now, will you come? If so, you cannot be cast out. "Whoever believes on Him is not condemned." Do you believe on the Lord Jesus? Do you take Him now to be your Savior? If you do, your personal lack of power shall be no hindrance. You have no power whatever, but there is none needed in you. When Christ raised the dead he did not rake among the ashes to find a lingering spark of vitality, but He said, "Live." And if you are as dead as Lazarus of whom Martha said, "Lord, by this time he stinks," the voice of mercy can yet make you live. Can you believe this? If you can believe in Jesus you shall be saved! If you can believe that Jehovah Jesus, the Son of God, can save you, and if you can rest upon His merits, though in you there is no grain of merit, though in you there is no vestige of power or spiritual strength, this shall not stand in your way; and though your sins are as damnable as those of Satan, and your iniquity of heart as deep as Hell itself, yet if you can trust in Jesus to save you, difficulty vanishes before the merit of His blood.

I know you say, "If I felt happy I could trust Christ. If I felt tender, if I felt holy." No, friend, you would not be trusting *Christ,* you would be trusting your *feelings,* and your *tenderness* would be your confidence. But now you have no feeling of tenderness or holiness that can recommend you to God. Come then as you are, wretched, undone, self-condemned, and self-abhorred; come and cast yourself upon the mercy

of God as He reveals Himself in the bleeding body of His dear Son, and if you can do this you will glorify God. "Oh," you say, "how could such a poor soul as I am ever bring glory to God?" Sinner, I say it is in your power, if God enables you, to bring more glory to God in a certain sense than the living saint can, for the living saint only believes that God can keep him alive, but for you under a pressing sense of guilt still to believe that Jesus can give you perfect liberty and save you—oh, this glorifies Him! There is not an angel before the throne of God who can believe such great things of God as you can. An angel has no sin. He cannot, therefore, believe that Jesus can put away his sin, but you can. "If you believe in Jesus, though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool, though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." If you do God the honor to believe that He can do what He has said; if you rest in Jesus, you shall have the comfort, He shall have the glory, and your soul shall have the salvation. Emptied of self you have no life, no strength, and no goodness; in fact you have nothing to recommend you, but come as you are and the Lord will bless you and give you the desire of your heart, and unto Him be the glory. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JAMES 1.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE DAWN OF REVIVAL, OR PRAYER SPEEDILY ANSWERED
NO. 734

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 10, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"At the beginning of your supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show you; for you are greatly beloved."
Daniel 9:23.

PRAYER is useful in a thousand ways. It is spiritually what the old physicians sought after naturally, namely, a catholicon—a remedy of universal application. There is no ease of need, distress, or dilemma, in which prayer will not be found to be a very present help. In the case before us Daniel had been studying the book of Jeremiah, and had learned that God would accomplish 70 weeks in the desolation of Jerusalem, but he felt that there was still more to be learned, and he set his face to learn it. His was a noble and acute mind, and with all its energies he sought to pry into the prophetic meaning; but he did not rely upon his own judgment; he committed himself at once to prayer. Prayer is that great key which opens mysteries. To whom should we go for an explanation if we cannot understand a writing, but to the author of the book? Daniel appealed at once to the Great Author, in whose hand Jeremiah had been the pen. In lonely retirement the prophet knelt upon his knees, and cried unto God that He would open up to him the mystery of the prophecy, that he might know the full meaning of the 70 weeks, and what God intended to do at the end of them, and how He would have His people behave themselves to obtain deliverance from their captivity. Daniel made his plea unto the Lord to unloose the seals and open the volume of the book, and he was heard and favored with the knowledge which he might have sought for in vain by any other means. Luther used to say that some of his best understandings of Holy Scripture were not so much the result of meditation as of prayer; and all students of the Word will tell you that when the hammers of learning and Biblical criticism have failed to break open a flinty text, oftentimes prayer has done it, and nuggets of gold have been found concealed therein. To every student of the Word of God who would become a well-instructed scribe we would say, "With all the means which you employ, with all your searching of commentaries, with all your digging into the original languages, with all your research among learned divines, mingle much fervent prayer." As the Lord said to Israel, "With all your offerings you shall offer salt," so does wisdom say to us, "With all your searching, and with all your studying, offer much prayer." Rest assured that the old maxim, "To have prayed well is to have studied well," is worthy to be written not only upon the walls of our studies, but upon the tablets of our hearts. If you will place the book of Inspi-

ration before your attentive eyes, and ask the Lord to open up its meaning to you, the exercise of prayer itself shall be blessed by God to put your soul into the best state in which to get at the hidden meaning which lies concealed from the eyes of the worldly wise, but which is clearly manifested to meek and lowly souls, when they reverently seek the guidance of their heavenly Father.

The particular point in the text to which I would direct your attention this morning, is that Daniel's prayer was answered *at once,* while he was yet speaking, yes, and at the beginning of his supplication! It is not always so. Prayer sometimes tarries like a petitioner at the gate until the king comes forth to fill her bosom with the blessings which she seeks. The Lord when He has given great faith has been known to try it by long delays. He has allowed His servants' voices to echo in their ears as from a bronze sky. They have knocked at the golden gate, but it has remained immovable, as though it were rusted upon its hinges. Like Jeremiah they have cried, "You have covered Yourself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through." Thus have true saints continued in patient waiting for months, and there have been instances in which their prayers have even waited years without reply, not because they were not vehement, nor because they were unaccepted, but because so it pleased Him who is a sovereign, and who gives according to His own pleasure. If it pleases Him to bid our patience exercise itself, shall He not do as He wills with His own? Beggars must not be choosers either as to time, place, or form. Brothers and sisters must not take delays in prayer for denial—God's long-dated bills will be punctually honored; we must not allow Satan to shake our confidence in the God of truth by pointing to our unanswered prayers. We are dealing with a being whose years are without end, to whom one day is as a thousand years—far be it from us to count Him slack by measuring His doings by the standard of our little hour. Unanswered petitions are not unheard. God keeps a file for our prayers, they are not blown away by the wind, they are treasured in the king's archives. There is a registry in the court of heaven where every prayer is recorded. O tried believer, your sighs and your tears are not fruitless; God has a tear bottle in which the costly drops of sacred grief are put away, and a book in which your holy groans are numbered; and by-and-by your pleas shall prevail. Can you not be content to wait a little? Will not your Lord's time be better than your time? By-and-by He will comfortably appear, to your soul's joy, and make you put away your sackcloth and ashes of long waiting, and put on the scarlet and fine linen of full fruition.

However, in the case of Daniel, the man greatly beloved, there was no waiting at all. In Daniel's case the promise was true, "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." The man Gabriel was made to fly very swiftly, as though even the flight of an angel was hardly swift enough for God's mercy. Oh how fast the *mercy* of God travels, and how long His anger lingers! "Fly," He said, "bright spirit, try your utmost power of wing! Descend to my waiting servant and fulfill his desire." Brothers and sisters, my heart's desires and earnest longings are that at the commencement of our supplication we may have an answer

from the throne of God. This is the commencement of our prayers only in a certain sense, for prayer has never ceased here—for the last few months the public meeting for prayer every morning and every night has been sustained by earnest brothers and sisters—but we are now at the commencement of a month of more special prayer, and I pant for an early visitation of divine grace. It will be a very blessed encouragement to us, a stimulus to more intense ardor, an argument for greater confidence in God if we should be favored, with Daniel, to receive gracious answers to our supplications at their very commencement.

In speaking of such a mercy, two points press for consideration, first, *reasons for justly expecting so early a blessing;* and secondly, *forms in which we earnestly desire and hopefully expect it.*

I. First, have we any REASONS TO EXPECT THAT AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF OUR SUPPLICATION THE COMMANDMENT OF MERCY WILL COME FORTH? Rest assured that we have, if we are found in the same posture as Daniel, for God acts towards His servants by a fixed rule. Let self-examination be now in vigilant exercise while we compare ourselves with the successful prophet.

God will hear His people at the commencement of their prayers if the condition of the supplicant is fitted for it. The nature of such fitness we may gather from the state of Daniel's mind and the mode of his procedure. Upon this our first noteworthy observation is that Daniel was *determined to obtain the blessing which he was seeking.* Note carefully the expression which he has used in the third verse—"I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication." That setting of the face is expressive of resolute purpose, firm determination, undivided attention, fixed resolute perseverance. "I set my face towards the Lord." We never do anything in this world until we set our faces thoroughly to it. The warriors who win battles are those who are resolved to conquer or die. The heroes who emancipate nations are those who count no hazards and reckon no odds, but are resolved that the yoke shall be broken from the neck of their country. The merchants who prosper in this world are those who do their business with all their hearts, and watch for wealth with eagerness. The half-hearted man is nowhere in the race of life; he is usually contemptible in the sight of others, and a misery to himself. If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing well; and if it is not worth doing thoroughly, wise men leave it alone. Especially is this a truth in the spiritual life. Wonders are not done for God and for the truth of God by men asleep upon their beds, or out of their beds, but still asleep. Souls are not saved by men who scarcely know or care whether they are saved themselves. Errors are not dashed from their pedestals by those who are careless concerning truth and count it of little value. Reformations have not been worked in this world by men of lukewarm spirit and temporizing policy. One fiery Luther is of more value than 20 like the half-hearted Erasmus who knew infinitely more than he felt, and perhaps felt more than he dared to express.

A man, if he would do anything for God, for the truth, for the cross of Christ, must set his face and with the whole force of his will resolve to serve his God. The soldier of Christ must set his face like a flint against

all opposition, and at the same moment set his face towards the Lord with the attentive eyes of the handmaiden looking towards her mistress. If called to suffer for the truth of God, we must set our face towards this conflict as Jesus set His face towards Jerusalem. He who would conquer in this glorious war, and overcome the Lord at the mercy seat, must be resolved! Resolved with his whole soul—resolved after matured thought—resolved for reasons which are too weighty for him to escape—resolved that from the throne of grace he will not depart without the blessing! Never shall a man be unsuccessful in prayer who sets his face to win the promised mercy. Granted that you are seeking what you ought to seek for, that you are seeking it through Christ and by faith in Him, the one qualification to success that we recommend to you, brothers and sisters, is the setting of your faces towards the attaining of it. If there are but a dozen men in this, my church, who have set their faces for a revival, we shall surely have it—of this my heart knows no doubt. If there are but half-a-dozen, like Gideon's men that lapped—if, I say, there are but six who are unwavering, and will not be baulked by difficulties, or turned back by disappointments, as sure as God is God, He will hear the prayers of such. No, if it came down to but two or three, the promise is to two of us who are agreed as touching one thing concerning the kingdom of God; yes, more, if two could not be found, if there were but one faithful saint left, provided that he were endowed with the spirit and ardor of Daniel, he would yet prevail as Daniel did of old. We must not fail in the setting of our face towards the Lord. I humbly but devoutly ask God, the Holy Spirit, to give you, my beloved in the Lord Jesus, both men and women, members of this church, a solemn resolution that in the work in which we are engaged for God, you will not be satisfied unless the largest answers are granted. This was the first proof that God might safely give Daniel the blessing at once, for the prophet's heart was fixed in immutable resolve, and there was no turning him from the point. Now, if a beggar is resolved to have his request, you may as well give in at once, it is wasting both his time and yours to put him off with delays, we think it best to give it to him at once, and so does our heavenly Father with us.

Next, Daniel *felt deeply the misery of the people for whom he pleaded.* Read that expression, "under the whole heaven has not been done as has been done upon Jerusalem." The condition of that city, lying in ruins, her inhabitants captives, her choicest sons banished to the ends of the earth, afflicted him very sorely. He had not a light superficial acquaintance with the sorrows of his people, but his inmost heart was embittered with the wormwood and the gall of their cup. Beloved, if God intends to give us souls He will prepare us for the honor by causing us to feel the deep ruin of our fellow creatures, and the fearful doom which that ruin will involve unless they shall escape from it. I would have you school yourselves till you obtain a horror of the sinner's sin—surely not so strange a task if you remember your own former estate and present tendencies! How fiery was that oven through which your spirit passed when the hand of God was heavy upon you both by day and night! I want you, my brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus, to get a clear view of the wrath of God which threatens your own children, your own friends, your fellow seat-holders,

your neighbors, your kinsfolk, unless they are saved. If you could get into your heart as well as into your creed the sincere belief that, "the wicked shall be turned into hell with all the nations that forget God." If you could remember that even those who hear the gospel have no way of escape if they remain impenitent, and that if they reject Christ there remains nothing for them but "a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation." If your soul could be made to melt for heaviness because of the woes of lost spirits, and because so many of your fellow men will within a little while be lost, lost as these others are, past all recall, beyond all hope, or all dream of alleviation—surely you would become awfully earnest about souls. We would hear praying of a mighty sort if believers sympathized with men in their ruin; then groans and tears would not be so scarce; then the soul, pouring out itself in groans which cannot be uttered, would be but an ordinary thing. Then shall we prevail with God, through the precious blood of Jesus when we feel intensely the sinner's need. If there are some here who really feel the terrors of the world to come and are bound under those terrors, and moved to wait and wrestle at the mercy seat till souls are rescued from their sins, there is no fear but what at the very commencement of our supplication the commandment to bless us will go forth.

In the next place, Daniel was ready to receive the blessing because *he felt deeply his own unworthiness of it.* I do not know that even the 51ST Psalm is more penitential than the chapter which contains our text. I bade you remark, while we were reading it, how the prophet confesses the people's sin and styles it by three, four, five, or more descriptive epithets, all expressive of his deep sense of its blackness. Read the chapter and note how he humbly acknowledges sins of commission, sins of omission, and especially sins against the warnings of God's word and the entreaties of God's servants. The prophet is very explicit. He lays bare his heart before the Lord; he tears off every film from the corruption of the people; he exposes the wound to the inspection of the Great Surgeon, and asks Him to send it health and cure. I believe that the Lord is about to bless that man, personally, to whom He has given a deep sense of sin; and certainly that church which is willing to make confession of its own sinfulness and unworthiness is on the eve of a visitation of love. Let us go, then, to our God—I pray that the Holy Spirit may enable us to go to Him—each man and woman making confession for himself apart. Individual confession is needed. I have sins, which perhaps you might not discover in me, sins which it were not possible for you to commit, because you are not placed in my station. You, too, have in your families, in your business, in your private and public lives, sins with which I am not acquainted. Each man and woman has a point of sin where he is separated from his fellows; and each man and woman must therefore make his own confession, apart, with the fullest honesty, with the deepest humiliation; and each one must add to his acknowledgements the humble prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts." My dear fellow-members, are you conscious each one, of your own personal iniquity towards the Lord your God? Then let not this day pass till a full confession has been made; and should there

remain, dear brothers and sisters, in us as a church any transgression unconfessed, I hope the Lord may lead us to confess it. If we have been proud of our numbers; if we have been exalted by success; if there should be any bickering among us; if any Christian here has any ill feeling towards another, let not this day go down till all such evil is removed. I am very conscious that, in the midst of so large a church, much sin may remain undetected. O for great searching of heart! Beloved, you will certainly spoil our hopes and cause us to miss the blessing unless every evil thing is put away. Let this be a day for purging out the old leaven, that we may keep the feast not with the leaven of malice, but in holiness as becomes the disciples of Jesus. The idols must be utterly abolished; and till we put them all away, we cannot expect to receive a blessing from the Lord our God. "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Let us bless His name for His exceedingly great goodness to us as a church, and sing of all His loving-kindness which He has shown to us these 13 years. Let us confess our unworthiness, our coldness, and deadness, and lethargy, and wanderings of heart, and the backsliding of many among us, and then, having confessed our faults, we may expect that at the very commencement God will visit us. When the vessel is empty, heaven's fountain will fill it; when the ground is dried and chapped, and begins to open her mouth with thirst, down shall come the rain to make fat the soil. When we feel a sense of need, deep and crushing, then shall a blessing shine forth from the presence of the Most High. "At the beginning of your supplication the commandment came forth."

But again, dear friends, we have not exhausted the points in Daniel which deserve our imitation; you will notice that Daniel had *a clear conviction of God's power to help His people in their distress,* his lively sense of divine power was based upon what God had done in the olden times. One is interested to note in the history of the Jews, how in every dark and stormy hour their minds reverted to one particular point of their history! Just as the Greek, in the days when Greece was living Greece, would remember Thermopylae and Marathon, and feel his eyes sparkle and every sinew grow strong at the thought of the heroic day when his fathers slew the Persians, and broke the yoke of the great king, so with nobler emotions, because more heavenly, the Israelite always thought of the Red Sea, and what the Lord did to Egypt when He divided the waters, and they stood upright as a heap that His people might pass through. Daniel, in the prayer says, "You have brought Your people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have gotten You renown, as at this day." He lays hold upon that deed of ancient prowess and pleads, in effect, after this fashion: "You can do the same, O God, and glorify Your name anew, and assure deliverance to Your people." My brothers and sisters, in the bonds of the Lord Jesus, you and I may at this moment draw comfort from the fact that this God who divided the Red Sea is our God forever and ever, and is at this hour as mighty as when He overthrew the horse and his rider in the mighty waters. We worship the God who loves His chosen now even as He did of old. It is written, "But as for His people, He led them forth like sheep," and so He leads us. He led

them through the wilderness and brought them to the promised rest; and even thus will He bring us to our eternal home! O God, You who went forth before Your people, go forth before *us* after the same fashion! Though doubts and fears roll before us like a sea, remove them, we beseech You! Though our iniquities clamor behind us, swallow them up in the Red Sea of Jesus' blood! Though we march through the wilderness, yet give us heaven's manna, and let the rock distil with living streams! Though we deserve not to be visited by Your love, yet are we not Your people and the sheep of Your pasture? Are we not called by Your name? Have You not bought us with Your blood? Bring us into the Promised Land! Give us the heritage of Your people, and bless us with the blessings of Your chosen. We too, if we are sensible of past mercies to the church of God, and to ourselves personally, shall then be ready to receive present mercy.

But once more, the most apparent point about Daniel's prayer is his *peculiar earnestness*. To multiply expressions such as, "O Lord! O Lord! O Lord!" may not always be right. There may be much sin in such repetitions, amounting to taking God's name in vain. But it is not so with Daniel. His repetitions are forced from the depths of his soul, "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hearken and do!" These are the fiery volcanic eruptions of a soul on fire, heaving terribly. It is just the man's soul needing vent. Jesus Himself, when He prayed most vehemently, prayed three times, using the same words. Variety of expression sometimes shows that the mind is not altogether absorbed in the object, but is still able to consider the mode of its utterance; but when the heart becomes entirely swallowed up in the desire it cannot stay to polish and fashion its words, it seizes upon any expressions nearest to hand, and with these it continues its entreaties. So long as God understands it, the troubled mind has no anxiety about its modes of speech. Daniel here, with what the old divines would have called multiplied ingeminations, groans himself upward till he gains the summit of his desires. To what shall I liken the pleadings of the man greatly beloved? It seems to me as though he thundered and lightened at the gate of heaven. He stood there before God and said to Him, "O You Most High, You have brought me to this just as you did Jacob to the Jabbok, and with You all night I mean to stay and wrestle till the break of day. I cannot, will not let You go except You bless me." No prayer is at all likely to bring down an immediate answer if it is not a fervent prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much," but if it is not fervent we cannot expect to find it effectual or prevalent. We must get rid of the icicles that hang about our lips. We must ask the Lord to thaw the ice caves of our soul and to make our hearts like a furnace of fire heated seven times hotter. If our hearts do not burn within us we may well question whether Jesus is with us. Those who are neither cold nor hot He has threatened to spew out of His mouth; how can we expect His favor if we fall into a condition so obnoxious to Him? Our God is a consuming fire, and He will not have communion with us until our souls grow to be like consuming fires, too. Unless we are warm with love to God, we cannot expect the love of God to manifest itself in us to its highest degree. Now I know some of you are

cold enough. But I thank God we have a great many very warm-hearted earnest Christians in connection with this church. Christians I will here make bold to say, that I never expected to live to see, such true and lovely saints. I have seen apostolic piety revived in this church; I will say it before the throne of God, I have seen as earnest and as true a piety as Paul or Peter ever witnessed. I have seen in some here present such godly zeal, such holiness, such devotion to the Master's business, as Christ Himself would look upon with joy and satisfaction. But there are others who are members of the church who never enter heartily into our projects of labor, nor yet unite with our solemn assemblies of prayer. What shall I say of them? If I were to speak sharply they would only say that I scolded them with severity and that might not serve my turn, for I desire their best interests. Shall I not rather say to them, "My dear brothers and sisters, if you are indeed with us, if you have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, we do beseech you, ask the Lord to make you more earnest than the most earnest of us have ever been, and to make you, if you have been laggards, to now take the front place. If you have been slow either in the generosity of your giving, or in the earnestness of your pleading, ask the Lord that you may from this day on double your pace, and do more in the time that remains for you in this life than others might be expected to do who have not before now been so backward as you have been.

Of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum—if the whole church in this place shall be brought to set its face, to be conscious of the deep need of sinners, to confess its own sin, to be mindful of God's mercy, and to be vehemently, passionately in earnest for a blessing, I cannot for my own part see the slightest reason why at the commencement of the supplication the commandment should not go forth.—

"Let us pray! The Lord is willing,
Ever waiting, prayer to hear;
Ready, His kind words fulfilling,
Loving hearts to help and cheer!"

Thus much upon that first reason. We may expect a speedy answer to prayer when the condition of the suppliant is as God would have it.

Secondly, I believe we have every reason to expect a blessing when we consider *the mercy itself*. That which we as a church are seeking is, if I understand your hearts and my own, just this—we want to see our own personal piety deepened and revived, and we want to see sinners saved. Well, is not that in itself so good a thing that we may expect the Giver of every good and perfect gift to give it to us? We need not ask the sun to shine—is it not its very office as a sun to do so? We ask God to give us this good thing—is it not according to the nature of the Father of lights to bestow on us such mercies? We seek that which is for the good of His church—the church which He has purchased with His own blood. A brother once remarked in prayer that none of us would let our spouse ask again and again for any good thing and refuse her; if it were in our power to give her anything under heaven we would feel it our greatest delight to do so; and shall the bride, the Lamb's wife, find her husband less kind than we poor evil mortals are to our wives? No. If Christ's church

pleads with her own Husband, she cannot be refused. Depend upon it, her royal Husband will give her according to His infinite fullness.

What we ask is for God's glory. We are not seeking a gift which may glorify *us* or may exalt some one of our fellow men. We crave not victory for the arms of a warrior; we ask not success for the researches of a philosopher; we seek nothing which can bring honor to human prowess or to human wisdom; we seek that which will put crowns upon the head of our gracious God, and we seek it with the one pure desire that He may be glorified. Above all, we ask that which is dear to the heart of Christ. He is the friend of sinners—for sinners He lived, for sinners He died, for sinners He rose, for sinners He pleads, for sinners He reigns in glory; and if we come to God and say to Him, "By the blood and wounds of Jesus, by the griefs of Gethsemane, and by the groans of Calvary, hear us!" how can it be that we shall be kept waiting? No, I gather that if such is the burden of the prayer, at the beginning we shall receive it.

Thirdly, there is another thing which encourages me, namely, *the nature of the relations which exist between God and us.* Is not that a choice word, "O man greatly beloved"? "Yes," you will perhaps say, "it is easy to understand why God should send so swift an answer to Daniel, because he was a man greatly beloved." Ah, has your unbelief made you forget that *you* are greatly beloved, too? You, my dear brothers and sisters, as believers in Jesus Christ, will not be at all presumptuous if you apply to yourself the title of, "Man, greatly beloved." I will ask you a few questions which will prove your title. Must you not have been greatly beloved to have been bought with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot? When God spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for you, must you not have been greatly beloved? Let me ask you about your experience. You lived in sin, and rioted in it. Must you not have been greatly beloved for God to have had patience with you? You were called by grace and led to a Savior, and made a child of God and an heir of heaven. Why, that proves, does it not, a very great and superabounding love? Since that time, whether your path has been rough with troubles, or smooth with goodness, I have no doubt it has been full of proofs that you are a man greatly beloved. If the Lord has chastened you, yet not in anger; if He has made you poor, you have been greatly beloved in your poverty. I know this, when I look back upon my own life, I must confess my unworthiness and acknowledge my sin most sincerely, and yet I dare to feel and to say that I am a man greatly beloved of my God; for He has given me such distinguished mercies to enjoy, when I have deserved not even the least of them, that I cannot help saying, "He crowns me with loving kindnesses and tender mercies." I make my boast in the tender mercy of my God all the more freely because I am sure that you, my beloved, also are especially beloved of heaven. The more unworthy you feel yourselves to be, why, the more evidence you have that nothing but unspeakable love could have led the Lord Jesus to save such a soul as yours! The more unworthiness the saint feels, the more proof of the great love of God in having chosen him and called him and made him an heir of bliss! Now, if there is such love between God and us, let us ask very boldly. Do not let us go to God as though we were strangers, or as

though He were unwilling to give—we are greatly beloved. "If He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things." Come boldly, brother; come boldly, sister, for despite the whisperings of Satan and the doubts of your own heart, you are greatly beloved; and Jesus says, "Ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." Who will refuse to ask when such encouragements are suggested to our minds?

But enough! I am afraid I shall weary you on this point, and I need a long time on the second. But time has gone; therefore a few minutes must suffice. O swift-winged time, I could gladly delay you when such a theme is on hand!

II. If we are to gain the blessing at the commencement, IN WHAT FORM SHOULD WE PREFER TO HAVE IT?

Could I have my heart's desire, I would crave a blessing *for every one of you.* I wish the blessing would come on me at the commencement, that I might preach with more power and pray with more fervor, and that my own spiritual life might be of a more healthy and vigorous character. I wish the blessing might come on you, my dear brothers, deacons and elders, for in the management of such a church as this you need much more grace than falls to the lot of ordinary men. I pray that you may be made examples to this flock, true guides in this, our Israel. I wish that the Holy Spirit may fall on all of you workers for Christ who will be here this afternoon. The Lord bless you Sunday school teachers. May you weep in your classes today! Pray for your children before you begin to talk with them! May my dear friends who teach our great classes of men and women have a rich blessing this afternoon! May it be seen in Mrs. Bartlett's class and Mr. Ranks' class, and the others, that the Lord is with you indeed, and of a truth! It would be a great token for good if this very day we felt the first waves of a great revival. I wish the Lord's power would come upon some of His people who do nothing, that they may be dreadfully miserable this afternoon, that they may be so unhappy that they cannot stay at home, but be compelled to start out and do good. You who are working, may God help you to work with heart and soul, not doing it officially as of routine, but doing it with your very life, as though your heart's blood warmed in the work and your soul's breath were in every word you spoke. You who do so little, O may the Master compel you to amend your ways. It would be a very blessed sign of grace if every one of us felt this day, "Perhaps there is something more I could do for Christ; I shall do it at once. Perhaps there is something I might give to Christ; some department of Christian labor shall have a special donation from me. Perhaps I have a talent which I have never used, like an old sword hanging on the wall, and in this day of battle every weapon must be used, and I have not used mine. Now, before the Lord I lift my hand to heaven, and I ask that if I have anything, even though it is the smallest talent, if I have not used it, may He help me to use it at once." This is such a dark world that we must not waste the tiniest piece of candle. The night is so dark that even a glowworm must not refuse to give its feeble ray. Each one of us must give personal service to Christ. Do you not know that all God's people are priests? These lying priests nowadays, put

on their gaudy trappings like the priests of Baal, and come forward and say, "We are priests." Priests of Dagon, priests of Baal, priests of hell, but not God's priests! God's priests are those who are alive from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit, and every man and every woman here who loves Jesus is a priest to God!

O brothers and sisters, God would have you all act as priests, and not to say, "We have a minister, let him serve God for us." I will have nothing to do with your responsibilities. Serve God yourselves; it is as much as I can do to serve Him; only by His grace am I upheld under my own load; in fact, my own responsibilities are so heavy that I cannot bear them; but as for being a proxy for any one of you, I cannot be anything of the kind! Personally, you were bought with blood; personally, you hope to enter heaven; personally, then, consecrate yourselves this day unto the Lord, and if you do so, oh, what a blessing it will be! May God send a new and quickened life into His people at the commencement of our supplication!

I was turning over in my mind how early and sweet a blessing it would be if the Lord would give us today, this morning, this evening, this afternoon some *conversions*. Who shall we especially plead for? What kind of conversions do we desire? What if the Lord would call by grace some of the children of the church members; what a blessing that would be! Oh for salvation for our sons and daughters! Pray for them; parents, pray for them; pray now, and the Lord will hear you. Or suppose He were to give to some dear brother here the soul of his wife for whom he has prayed so long; or to some of you, my sisters, your husbands who are still in the gall of bitterness. I would take it as a special favor if the Lord would give us our dearest friends. I look forward during this month with the hope that we may see some in our own households, our servants, our children, and our unconverted friends and acquaintances saved. But we are not selfish; we should think it a priceless blessing if some of you who have been seat-holders for years were to yield to sovereign grace. I am afraid for many of you because you have felt the power of the gospel in a measure, but there is some darling sin you cannot give up, which sin will be your everlasting ruin. I remember M'Cheyne says, "Christ gives last knocks." That is a very sorrowful thought. He knocks at the door, but there is such a thing as a "last knock," and some of you will get your last knock before long; He will never knock again; you will never have another warning nor another invitation, but He will say, "Let him alone, let him alone." You, perhaps, will feel all the easier, but ah, if you do not wake here, you will wake up in hell; and if before long God does not startle you into repentance, you will be startled into everlasting despair. O, may God give us your souls this day!

It would be no small mercy if the Lord would give us many of the casual hearers who will be here tonight, or are now here this morning. I cannot understand why it is these aisles are always crowded, and why on Sunday night the doors have to be closed and thousands shut out; why men rush into this House as eagerly as if they came here to get gold and treasure—they seem so earnest and so eager, and push and tread, one upon another. Surely God must bless some of them. We never know who are here—men from the utmost ends of the earth—of all nations, kin-

dreds, and tongues; crowds who never heard the gospel at all. I am so thankful to think of them, because when they do hear it, if they have never heard it before, they are, perhaps, more likely to be blessed by it than those who have grown hardened under the sound of it. O, for a mighty cry! A prevailing cry! A heaven-shaking cry! A cry that would make the gates of heaven open! A cry which God's arm could not resist; the cry of all the saints here, knit together in love, with holy vehemence, using the great plea of the atoning sacrifice, and making this the burden of their cry, "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years. In wrath remember mercy." Let the gracious visitation begin in this place if God so pleases, but we shall be equally content if it begins anywhere else—let Him but throw the stone into the stagnant pool of His church, and I can see the first circle going round these galleries and many of you saved; I can see the next circle enclosing the neighboring churches; I can see it spread over London—I can see the widening amphitheatre taking in the whole of this United kingdom; I can see it cross the Atlantic—till all round the world God's kingdom spreads, and days of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord. Now let us say in His sight, if He does not please to hear us at the commencement of the supplication, yet it is our desire to wait upon Him until He does. O You, our Beloved, if the day does not break nor the shadows flee away, if You will still remain hidden behind the mountains of separation, yet we wait for You as they who wait for the morning, and we watch and long as the watchman watches for the rising of the sun. But do not tarrying, O our God! Make haste, our Beloved; "Be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether," for Your name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—DANIEL 9:1-23.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

If you are curious as to some of the results of *this sermon*, read sermon #737— GOD—ALL IN ALL

LOVING ADVICE FOR ANXIOUS SEEKERS
NO. 735

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 17, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him."
James 1:5.

IF YOU are acquainted with the context, you will at once perceive that this verse has a special reference to persons in trouble. Much-tempted and severely-tried saints are frequently at their wits end, and though they may be persuaded that in the end good will come out of all their afflictions, yet for the present they may be so distracted as not to know what to do. How fitly spoken and how seasonable is this word of the apostle, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God," and such wisdom shall the Lord afford His afflicted children, that the trying of their faith shall produce patience, and they themselves shall count it all joy that they have fallen in many and different trials.

However, the promise is not to be limited to any one particular application, for the word, "If *any* of you," is so wide, so extensive, that whatever may be our necessity, whatever the dilemma which perplexes us, this text consoles us with the counsel, "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God."

This text might be peculiarly comforting to some of you who are working for God. You cannot work long for your heavenly Lord without perceiving that you need a greater wisdom than your own. Why, even in directing an inquirer to the cross of Christ, simple work as that may seem to be, we shall often discover our own inability and folly. In rebuking the backslider, in comforting the desponding, in restoring the fallen, in guiding the ignorant, we shall need to be taught of God, or else we shall meet with more failures than successes. To every honest Christian worker this text speaks with all the soft melody of an angel's whisper. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." Your lips shall overflow with knowledge, and your tongue shall drop with words of wisdom, if you will but wait on God and hear Him before you speak to your fellow men. You shall be made wise to win souls if you will learn to sit at the Master's feet, that He may teach you the art which He followed when on earth, and still follows.

But the class of persons who just now win my heart's warmest sympathies are those who are seeking the Savior; and, as the text says, "If *any* of you," I thought I should be quite right in giving seekers a share in it. They are seeking Christ, but they are in the dark; their soul desires Him, but it has little light, little guidance, and their cry is, "O that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat!" I thought that this text might be as the balm of Gilead to some of these unwise ones, who have found out all of a sudden their own sin and folly. I thought it would say to them, "If you, poor sinner, if you lack wisdom, seek of God who gives to all liberally, and upbraids not." Let us put ourselves, then, at once in order for this work of comforting seekers, and may God the Holy Spirit, make it effectual.

I. First, I shall call your attention to THE GREAT NEED OF MANY SEEKERS, NAMELY, WISDOM. This need occurs from many reasons. Sometimes it is *their pride* which makes them fools. Like Naaman, they would do some *great thing* if the prophet had bid them, but they will not wash and be clean.

The natural heart rebels against the simplicity of the way of salvation. "What? Am I to do nothing but simply accept the righteousness already finished? Am I to leave off doing, and merely look unto Him who was nailed to the tree, and find all my salvation in Him? "Well, then," says the proud heart, "I cannot understand it." It cannot understand it because it does not love it. Now, soul, if this is your difficulty, and I believe, in nine cases out of ten, a proud heart is at the root of all difficulty about the sinner's coming to Christ—if this is it which turns you aside and makes you foolish, then go to God about it, and seek wisdom from Him. He will show you the folly of this pride of yours, and teach you that simply to trust in Jesus is at once the safest and most suitable way of salvation. He will make you see that if the way of salvation had been by doing, the method would not have suited you, for what could you do? If it had been by feeling, it would not have suited you either, for what can your hard heart feel? How can you make yourself tender of heart? But, seeing that it is by faith, it is therefore by divine grace. O that you may be made wise enough to stoop and kiss the silver scepter which is outstretched to you, to come and buy this wine and milk, without money and without price, and accept with your whole heart, with intense joy, this perfect righteousness, this finished salvation which Christ has worked out and brought in for every seeking soul.

Many persons, also, are made foolish so that they lack wisdom through *their despair.* Probably, nothing makes a man seem so much like a maniac as the loss of hope. When the mariner feels that his vessel is sinking, that the proud waves must soon overwhelm her; he then reels to

and fro, and staggers like a drunken man, because he is at his wits' end! Ah, poor heart, when you see the blackness of sin, I do not wonder that you are driven to despair; and when your sins come howling behind you like so many ravenous wolves, all seeking to devour you, I do not marvel if you should be ready even to lay violent hands upon yourself. It is no strange thing for men to be sorely tempted when they are under a sense of sin. And now you know not what to do. If you could be calm and quiet, we could tell you plainly the way of peace, and you might understand that there is no reason for despair, since Jesus died and rose again, and is "able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him." But you cannot give us a calm hearing, for you are distracted, and you think that this comfort applies to everybody but you. You lack wisdom because you are in such a worry and turmoil. As John Bunyan used to say, you are much troubled up and down in your thoughts. I pray you, then, ask wisdom of God, and even out of the depths if you cry unto Him, He will be pleased to instruct you and bring you out into a safe way.

No doubt many other persons lack wisdom because they are *not instructed in gospel doctrine*. It is amazing how Satan will plague many timid hearts with the doctrine of election. That doctrine, rightly understood, is full of comfort; but, distorted and misrepresented, it often appears to be a bolt to shut sinners out from divine mercy—the fact being that it shuts none out, but shuts millions in. Why, the very doctrine of the atonement is not understood by many, while they are under a sense of sin. If they could see that Christ took their sins and carried their sorrows; if they could perceive the meaning of that word, "Substitution," light might break in. The window of the understanding is blocked up with ignorance, if we could but clean away the cobwebs and filth then might the light of the knowledge of Christ come streaming in, and they might rejoice in His salvation. Well, dear friends, if you are confused and puzzled with difficult doctrine, the text comes to you and says, "If any lacks wisdom, let him ask of God."

Ignorance also of Christian experience is another cause for the lack of wisdom. I have seen many inquirers who have told me what they have felt, and to them it was so amazing, that they half expected to see every individual hair of my head stand upright while they told me their feelings; and when I said, "Oh, yes, yes, I have felt just that; that is the common way of most souls that come to Christ," they have looked surprised beyond measure. The very road which is most safe, you think to be most dangerous; and that which leads to Christ, you fancy leads to hell. Little do you know the value of that stripping work which you so much dread. "Surely," you say, "I am being stripped that I may be cast away," whereas the Lord only strips those whom He intends afterwards

to clothe with the robe of His salvation! Those cuts of the lancet are sharp, and you think the surgeon means to kill, but he intends to cure. When God is making you feel the burden of your guilt, you suppose that now He has forgotten to be gracious, whereas it is now that He *is* gracious to you in very deed, and is using the best means of making you understand and value His grace. The way of life is a new road to you, poor seeking soul, and therefore you lack wisdom in it, and make many mistakes about it. The text lovingly advises, "Ask of God." "Ask of God."

Very likely, in addition to all this, which may well enough make you lack wisdom, there are *certain singularities in the action of providence towards you,* which fill you with dismay. Ever since you have begun to think about the Lord Jesus, things have gone cross with you in the outward world. You have not only trouble within, but, strange as you think it is, you have now trouble without—it partly arises from friends who say you are mad—would God they were bitten with the same madness!—partly from circumstances over which you can have no control. It is not at all unusual for God to make a complete shipwreck of that vessel in which His people sail, although He fulfils His promise that not a hair of their heads shall perish. I should not wonder if He would cause two seas to meet around your ship, so that there should not be more than a few boards and broken pieces of the ship left to you, but oh, if you have faith in Christ, He will certainly bring you safe to shore! It is not at all an uncommon thing for the Lord to add to the inward scourging of conscience the outward lashings of affliction. These double scourging are meant for proud, stubborn hearts, that they may be humbly brought to Jesus' feet, for of us it may be said, in truth, as Solomon says of the child—"Foolishness is bound in his heart; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." God is thus, dear hearer, bringing folly out of you by the smarts of His rod. It is written, "The blueness of a wound cleanses away evil," and therefore the Lord is making your wounds to be black and blue, and I should not wonder if He will even let them putrefy, till you have to say with Isaiah, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." Then it is that eternal mercy will take advantage of your dire extremity, and your deep distress shall bring you to Christ who never would have been brought by any other means.

To close this somewhat painful picture. Many lack wisdom because in addition to all their fears and their ignorance, they are fiercely attacked by *Satan*. John Bunyan tells us of Apollyon, that he said, "No king will willingly lose his subjects." Of course he will not; and Apollyon, as he sees his subjects one after another desert him to enlist under the banner of King Jesus, howls at his losses, and he leaves no stone unturned to

keep souls back from divine mercy. Just at that critical moment when the soul is beginning to turn to God, he says to himself, "It is now or never. If I do not nip these buds, they will become flowers and fruits; but if I can bring in a withering frost, I shall kill the young plant." The great enemy takes dead aim at anxious souls. He it is who digs that Slough of Despond right in front of the Wicket Gate, and keeps the big dog to howl before the door, so that poor trembling mercy may go into a fainting fit, and find herself too weak to knock at the door. "Now," he says to all his servants, "shoot your arrows at that awakened soul; it is about to escape from me—empty your quivers, you soldiers of the pit of hell; launch your hot temptations, you fiends of hell! Sting that soul with infidel insinuations and hideous blasphemies, for if I once lose it I have lost it forever; therefore, hold it, you princes of the pit, hold it fast, if you can." Now, in such a plight as that, with your foolish heart, and the wicked world, and the evil one, and your sins in dreadful alliance to destroy you, what could such a poor timid one as you do if it were not for this precious promise, "If any of *you*"—that must mean you—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally, and upbraids not"?

II. We shall now mention the second point in the text. THE PROPER PLACE OF A SEEKER'S RESORT—"Let him ask of God."

My dear friends bear me witness that it is my constant effort to teach you the spirituality of true religion, and the necessity of our own hearts having personal dealings with the living God. Now, though this you have heard thousands of times, I was about to say from me, yet, once again, I must remind you of it: the text says, "Let him *ask of God."* Now, you perceive, that we are directed at once to God without any intermediate object, or ceremony, or person. You are not told here to seek direction from good books; they may become very useful as auxiliary helps, but the best of human books, if followed slavishly, will mislead. For instance, I am sure that hundreds of persons have been kept in unnecessary bondage through that wonderful and admirable book, Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.* It has been the means of the conversion of hundreds; it has been profitable to thousands more; but there is a point in which it fails, so that, if you slavishly follow it, you may read the book through, and I undertake to say, you will not find comfort by following its exhortations. It fails, as all human guides must, if we trust in them and forget the Great Shepherd of Israel. When a man is really under concern of soul, he is in a condition of considerable danger. Then it is that an artful false teacher may get hold of him, and trick him into heresy and unscriptural doctrine. Therefore the text does not say, "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask his priest."—that is about the *worst* thing he can do, for he who sets himself up for a priest is either a deceiver or deceived.

"Let him ask of God"—that is the advice of the Scripture. We are all so ready to go to books, to go to men, to go to ceremonies, to anything except to God. Man will worship God with his eyes, and his arms, and his knees, and his mouth—with anything but his heart—and we are all of us anxious, more or less, until we are renewed by divine grace, to get off the heart-worship of God. Juan de Valdey says, that, "Just as an ignorant man takes a crucifix and says, 'This crucifix will help me to think of Christ,' so he bows before it and never does think of Christ at all, but stops short at the crucifix; so," he says, "the learned man takes his book and says, 'This book will teach me the mysteries of the kingdom,' but instead of giving his thoughts to the mysteries of godliness, he reads his book mechanically and stops at the book, instead of meditating and diving into the truths of God." It is the action of the mind that God accepts, not the motion of the body; it is the thought communing with Him; it is the soul coming into contact with the soul of God; it is spirit-worship which the Lord accepts. Consequently, the text does not say, "Let him ask books," nor, "ask priests," but, "let him ask of God."

Above all, do not let the seeker ask of himself and follow his own imagination and feelings. All human guides are bad, but you, yourself, will be your own worst guide. "Let him ask *of God."* When a man can fairly and honestly say, "I have bowed the knee unto the Lord God of Israel, and asked Him, for Jesus' sake, to guide me and to direct me by His Spirit, and then I turned to the Book of God, asking God to be my guide into the book," I cannot believe but what such a man will soon obtain saving wisdom.

I beg to caution all of you against stopping short of really asking *of God.* I conjure you by the living God, do not be satisfied with asking of me. I am no priest, except as all believers are priests, thank God. I wear no title of ecclesiastical dominion. Be not content with asking my brothers, the deacons and elders—God has made many of them wise in helping souls out of difficulties, but do not be satisfied with the advice of any man, however godly and holy, but go directly to the Lord God of heaven and earth, and say unto Him, "Lord, teach me! Show me Your way, O God! Teach me in Your truth!" You are not bid to go to any second-hand source of wisdom, but to God the only wise, who alone can direct you. "Let him ask of God."

Such advice as this must be good. You cannot suspect us of any interested motive in exhorting you to this. It is your good which we seek, and not our own glory. It must be best to go to the headquarters—you will surely be led aright if so you seek direction. Some say, Lo, here! Others say, Lo, there! But if you go to God, and then with His guidance study His Word, you shall not fail of wisdom. How can you?

Moreover, remember that there is one blessed person of the divine Unity who makes it His special office to teach us! Therefore, if you go to God for wisdom, you only go for that which it is His nature and His office to give. The Holy Spirit is given to this end: "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you." When you go to God, you may say to Him these words, "O Father, You have been pleased to reveal to us the Holy Spirit who is to enlighten our darkness, and to remove our ignorance. Oh, let that Spirit of Yours dwell in me; I am willing to be taught by Your Spirit, through Your word, or through Your ministers, but I come first to You, because I know that Your word and Your ministers, apart from Yourself, cannot teach me anything. O Lord, teach me." I do not mean by any word of mine to make you think little of Scripture—God forbid!—nor little of those who may speak to you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, but I did mean to make you look even at this Book, and at God's ministers, as being subservient to the Holy Spirit Himself. Go to Him; ask Him; for there in the Book is the letter which kills; He, He alone can make you to know the living essence and the quickening power of that word. Without the Holy Spirit, my dear hearer, you will still be as blind with the light of God as you would have been without it. You will be as foolish after having been taught the gospel in the theory of it, as you were before you knew it. Let the Holy Spirit, however, teach you, and you shall know all things that are necessary for this life and godliness.

Thus, then, we have brought two points before you—the great need of the seeker is "wisdom," and the right place to get that need removed.

III. Thirdly, THE RIGHT MODE IN WHICH TO GO TO GOD. *"Let him ask."* Oh, that simple word, "Let him *ask"*—"let him *ask!"* No form of asking is prescribed, no words laid down, no method dictated, no hour set apart, no rubric printed; but there it stands in gracious simplicity, "let him *ask."*

He who will not have mercy when it is to be had for the asking, deserves to die without it. While I am thinking of this word, before I plunge into its fullest meaning, I may well say, if God will give wisdom to the seeker only because he asks for it, what shall I say of the folly which will not even ask to be *made* wise? May God forgive you such folly for the past, and deliver you from it for the future.

The text says, "Let him ask," which is a method implying that *ignorance is confessed.* No man will ask wisdom till he knows that he is ignorant. Come, dear hearer, confess your ignorance into the ear of God, who is as present here as you are; say unto Him, "Lord, I have discovered now that I am not as wise as I thought I was; I am foolish and vain. Lord,

teach me." Make a full confession, and this shall be a good beginning for prayer.

Asking has also in it the fact that *God is believed in.* We cannot ask of a person of whose existence we have any doubt, and we *will not* ask of a person of whose hearing us we have serious suspicions. Who would stand in the desert of Sahara and cry aloud, where there is no living ear to hear? Now, my dear hearer, you believe that there is a God. Ask, then! Do you not believe that He is here, that He will hear your cry, and that He will be pleased in answer to your cry to give you what you ask for? Now, if you can believe that there is a God, that He is here and that He will hear you, then confess your ignorance, and ask Him now to give you the promised wisdom for Jesus' sake.

There is in this method of approaching God by asking, also *a clear sight that salvation is by divine grace.* It does not say, "Let him buy of God, let him demand of God. let him earn from God." Oh, no!—"let him ASK of God." It is the beggar's word. The beggar asks for alms. You are to ask as the beggar asks of you in the street, and God will give to you far more liberally than you give to the poor. You must confess that you have no merit of your own. If you will not acknowledge that, neither will God hear your prayers; but come now with the acknowledgment of ignorance, with the confession of sin, and believing that God is the rewarder of them who diligently seek Him, and He will even now give you the wisdom which saves the soul.

Observe here, what *an acknowledgement of dependence* there is. The man sees that he cannot find wisdom anywhere else, but that it must come from God. He turns his eyes to the only Fountain, and leaves the broken cisterns. Do this, dear hearer. I feel as if the text did not need any explanation from me, but only needs carrying out by you. Let him ask of God. I think I can hear 50,000 objections from different parts of the building. One is saying, "But I don't understand; 'ask of God.'" Another is saying, "I cannot comprehend; 'ask of God.'" If you have made some difficulties for yourself, if you are such a fool as to be tying knots and wanting to get them untied before you will believe in Jesus, then I have nothing to say to you, unless it were, beware lest you tie a knot that shall destroy your soul; but if you are troubled with an honest objection, I say to you *now*, in God's name, *"Ask of God."* You need not wait till you get home, you need not stay till you have left that seat, but *now*, silently, in your soul, as Hannah did when she went up to the tabernacle, breathe the prayer—"O God, teach me: lead me to the foot of the cross; help me to see Jesus; save my soul this day; end the doubtful strife; answer these questions; bring me, as an humble seeker, to lie before the footstool of

Your sovereign mercy and to receive pardon through the mediatorial sacrifice." "Let him ask—that is all—*let him ask."*

IV. Fourthly, the text has in it ABUNDANT ENCOURAGEMENT for such a seeker.

There are four encouragements here. "Let him ask of God, *who gives to all men."* What a wide statement—Who "gives to all men!" I will take it in its broadest extent. In natural things, God does give to all men life, health, food, raiment. Who "makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good," Who causes the rain to descend upon the fields of the just and of the unjust. Every creature is favored with divine benevolence; and there is not a creature, from the tiniest ephemera which creeps upon the green leaf of the forest, to the swift-winged angel who adoringly flies upon his Master's will, which is not made to partake of the gifts of the Great Father of Lights. Now, if God has gifts for all men, how much more will He have gifts for that man who earnestly turns his tearful eyes to heaven and cries, "My Father, give me wisdom, that I may be reconciled to You through the death of Your Son"? Why, the grass, as Herbert says, never asked for the dew, and yet every blade has its own drop; and shall you daily cry for the dew of divine grace, and there be no drop of heaven's grace for you? Impossible! Fancy your own child saying, "My Father, my Father, I want to be obedient, I want to be holy." And suppose that you have power to make your child so, could you find it in your heart to refuse? No; it would be a greater joy to you to give than it could be to the child to accept.

But it has been said, the text ought not to be understood in that broad a sense. Very probably it ought not to be so. I conceive that there is implied the limitation that God gives to all *who seek.* Though the limitation is not stated, yet I think it is intended, because of spiritual mercies God does not give to *all* men liberally. There are some men who live and die without the liberal favors of divine grace, because they wickedly refuse them; but He gives to all true seekers liberally. We may take that view of it, and we may find you hundreds of witnesses to prove the truth of it, and can find them in this very place this morning. Here is one witness; I myself personally sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. My dear brothers, and my sisters, too, I know you could spring up like a great army, if it were a fitting thing to ask you to do, and you could say, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." "The God of Jacob has not despised nor abhorred the cries of His people." Now, soul, if God has heard so many who sought His face, why should He not hear you? Is it not a comfort to think that hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands have gone to God, and there never has been a case in which He has refused one? Will He begin with you? Shall

you be the first rejected seeker? Oh, then, what a strange destiny yours will be, to have to say in another world, "I am the first who sought divine grace, and found it not; I wept at the foot of the cross, and I found no mercy. I said, 'Lord, remember me,' but He would not remember me." You will never be able to say that! Hell will never make its boast over such a case; heaven will never have its honor tarnished by one such solitary instance. Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore. Your hearts shall live who seek Him.

The next comfort is, He gives to all men *liberally*. God does not give as we do, a mere trifle to the beggar, but He bestows His wealth by the handfuls. Solomon asked for wisdom—God gave him wealth and power. In nearly every instance of prayer in the Old Testament, God gives 10 times as much as is asked for. Jacob asked that he might have bread to eat, and raiment to put on—God made him to be two bands. The Lord will "do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." This is the divine habit. He not only redeems His promises, but when He might pay them in silver He prefers to pay them in gold. He is exceedingly bountiful. Dear hearers, we have found Him so when we have tried Him, and do you think He will begin to be stingy with you? If He should liberally forgive your sins, He will be none the poorer; if He should withhold forgiveness, He will be none the richer. Why should He limit His favor? You need to wash away your sins—there is a river of grace to wash in. You need grace to refresh your souls—He has floods to pour upon the dry ground. We read of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Ho, you leviathan sinners, here is an ocean of mercy for you to swim in! Ho, you elephantine sinners, here is an ark large enough to hold you and float you above the waters of the deluge! Ho, you gigantic sinners, whose sins of pride reach up to heaven, and whose feet of lust are plunged in the mire of hell, the sacred hiding place is large enough to hide even you! The Lord is great in mercy. Oh, who would not ask of so liberal a God, whose thoughts are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth!

It is added as a third comfort, *"and upbraids not."* That is a sweet word. If you help a friend who is in debt, and wants to borrow money, you say, "Remember, I do not like it, you ought not to be in such a state." Your brother needs some aid; you have helped him many times, and will again, but still you upbraid him and tell him he is very imprudent; ought not to get into these messes; he ought to manage his business better. If you do not tell him so with your mouth, you look at him, and he thinks to himself, "It's very kind of him to give me the help, but really, it is very humiliating to me to have to ask of him because I get so severe a lecture." I suppose we do right to upbraid. I have no doubt we do so with good motives. But God never does upbraid seeking souls. He gives liber-

ally, and does not dim the luster of His grace by harsh rebukes. He does not say, "Ah, you sinner, how came you to commit such sin; I will forgive you, but _____." The Father does not talk thus to the returning prodigal. One would have supposed that when the prodigal came back, the father would have said, "Well, dear boy, you are forgiven, but never let me see you do that again. How wrong of you to take that portion of my goods, and spend it in that way! I shall never be as well off as before; you have wasted half my estate; and now think where you have been—what a dishonor you have cast upon your father's name and character through wasting your living with harlots. I forgive—but I cannot forget." My brothers and sisters, it was not so! The prodigal remembered his sins, but his father forgot them all, and exclaimed with joy, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." O soul, if you did but know the heart of the Savior, you would not tarry in sin. If you could but know the overflowing love of the divine Father, you would not linger in unbelief"—

"His heart is made of tenderness,
His heart melts with love."

Fool as you are, be not such a fool as to be unwilling to ask for wisdom, but now breathe the prayer, "Teach me, O God, to trust Your dear Son this day."

Then comes the last encouragement. *"It shall be given him."* Looking through my text last night, I asked the question—Is that last sentence needed? "Let him ask of God, which gives to all liberally, and upbraids not." Now, if the Lord gives to all men, He will certainly give to the seeker. Is that last promise needed? And I came to this conclusion, that it would not have been there if it was not required. There are some sinners who cannot be content to draw obvious inferences; they must have it in black and white. Such is the fearfulness of their nature; they must have the promise in so many exact words. Here they have it—"it shall be given him." You are not left to suppose that it shall be, or to infer that it may be, but it is written, "it shall be given him."

But to whom shall it be given? *If any of you lack wisdom.* "Well," says one, "I am quite out of all catalogs; I am one by myself." Well, but you are surely contained in this, *"any of you."* "Ah," says another, "but I have a private fault, a sin, an offense which I would not dare to mention, which I believe has damned me forever." Yet the text says, "If *any of you*." If I saw a door open, and it said, "If *any of you* are hungry, let him come in here," I would not stay outside because I feared that I was not quite the person intended, I would say, "It is their business who mean to keep me out, to be more specific in their invitation. They have put it, *'any of you.'* I am certainly one of the sons of men, and I will step into the feast." Ah soul, if God had meant to shut you out, He would have been plainer about it!

But here is not a shutting-out word at all; it says, "If any of you lack wisdom"—well, that is you, surely—that lack of wisdom helps to include you within the boundary. It does not limit the character; it widens it to you because you feel how foolish you are. The promise is, "it shall be given him." "Suppose I do not get it," you ask. You must not suppose God to be a liar. How can you suppose such a blasphemy? "Let him ask of God, and *it shall be given him."* "But," says one, "suppose my sins should prove to be too great?" I cannot, will not suppose anything which can come in conflict with the positive word of God. "Let him ask of God, and it shall be given him." Do you think God does not mean what He says? O sinner, will you add to all your other sins this sin of thinking that God would lie? O man, He invites you to ask of Him wisdom, and He says He will give it to you; doubt not the Lord, distrust not the veracity of Jehovah, but come at once humbly, tremblingly, to the foot of the Savior's cross. View Him lifted on high as the great atoning sacrifice; look to His streaming wounds; behold His brow still covered with the crimson drops which flow from the wounds caused by His crown of thorns. Look to Him and live! There's life in a look at the Crucified One! Look to Him, and the promise is that you shall be saved! I commend the text to the careful, thoughtful, believing acceptation of every sinner here. Ask that the sun may not go down until you each and all have received the promise which the text presents to you. May the Holy Spirit now give His own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
MATTHEW 5:1-12.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of
C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English,
and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit:
www.spurgeongems.org

A HAPPY CHRISTIAN
NO. 736

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

"And the Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."
Isaiah 58:11.

IT is very important that our preaching should sometimes give descriptions of Christians in an unhealthy and sickly state. So many are in this condition that, when we describe their symptoms, they may discover themselves, and by divine grace be led to desire escape from it. The proper remedies being pointed out, and the Christian being earnestly exhorted to the use of them, I am quite sure that such ministry as describes the unhealthy state of the Christian's experience will be found useful.

But I have sometimes thought—and I think you will, some of you, have noticed the same thing—that such preaching as continually dwells upon inward corruption and the innate baseness of the heart, is very apt to lead men to think that it must always be so with them. The prevalence of unbelief, depression of spirit, backsliding, and indifference to heavenly things becomes chronic, and they grow so familiar with reflecting upon it that they regard it as a state in which a Christian man may well be content. Now, when men come to think so, such ministry has done them a serious injury. When they flatter themselves that they outstrip their fellows in the humiliating experience of their own sinful passions, grow proud of those things which should cause them shame, and begin to look down upon others who talk of holy joys and gracious liberties as mere recruits in the army of which they are the veterans, then I say that the ministry has been poison to them, and the descriptions of carnal and devilish lusts they have listened to have fostered a wretched imagination. Instead of urging them to fight against sin, the sermons they have heard have only been rocking the cradle of their sloth, sewing pillows to their armholes, and saying to them, in some degree, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. It is not so popular a thing to do, but it is better in its influence to frequently hold up before the eye of the Christian the portrait of a believer in a healthy state; to let all who belong to the church understand that it is not necessary that we should be weak in faith, or that our hands should hang down, and our bones be feeble. There is a holier, happier, and more exalted state of triumphant faith, of sweet communion, and of hallowed earnestness; and such a state is attainable, no, it ought to be attained by all Christians, and when attained it ought

to be their constant ambition never to backslide from it; having once been placed upon the high mountain by a divine hand, they should always pray to be kept there, to the praise and glory of the grace of God.

We cherish a hope this evening, that by means of this text we may be able to give an humble portrait of what the Christian is in his happiest times, when the candle of the Lord shines round about him, when the visitations of the Holy Spirit refresh him, and when he rejoices in God with all his heart.

Will you please observe in what context this sunny sketch of prosperity occurs? It is set in a frame that excites the strong prejudice of some professing Christians. The setting is a framework of *duties*. You will perceive that the blessings are not promised to every Christian unconditionally, but it is fenced in with terms—"If you do this, and if you do that, then shall such-and-such blessings are yours." We are told that the heart is to be drawn from evil, that the soul is to be purged from the love of oppression, ostentation, and hypocrisy. There is to be a true and holy fast kept before the Lord, the soul being humbled and brought down to seek the Lord according to the spirit of righteousness, and not merely after the letter of the ordinances—then, and not till then, shall the blessings here promised be enjoyed. Though salvation is of divine grace, the happiness of the Christian does depend upon his obedience. Our ultimate safety is of sovereign grace. No man shall exceed me in the plain declaration that in this respect works of any sort cannot touch our salvation; we are saved upon another footing than that of our personal graces. But it is quite as plainly the teaching of Holy Scripture that answers to prayer, the enjoyment of the presence of God, and a healthy state of spirit, are very much dependent upon our cautious walking and our holy obedience to the divine will. There is an "if" here, and should any of us neglect and despise it, and fancy that we can still have our souls like "watered gardens," it will not be long before we shall find out our mistake.

Suppose, however, dear friends, that by divine grace we have been brought into communion with God; having been clothed in the sackcloth of true penitence before Him, and girded with the garments of salvation, it has been our desire, as in God's sight, to walk as becomes the saints; supposing, I say, we have been enabled by grace—and it cannot be otherwise—to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world," then that same Spirit who has sanctified us will, I am sure, fulfill to us the promises of the text.

I must, therefore, address myself to those who are living in the faith, and are walking conformably to their profession, while I depict their happy state. Five distinct features of their felicity are mentioned. They are described *as enjoying perpetual guidance, inward satisfaction, spiritual health, flourishing fruitfulness, and unfailing freshness of supply.*

I. These people who are thus full of God's Spirit are described as possessing CONTINUAL GUIDANCE.

"The Lord shall guide you continually." There come to them, as to other men, dilemmas in providence. Walking along the road of life you may suddenly reach a turn—two roads meet. Which is the way? Is it to the right hand or to the left? Possibly both may appear to be equally right. You ask friends or neighbors; they will readily enough mislead you with the best intentions. You consult your own heart, and if you follow its counsels you will discover yourself to be a fool. But, if your heart is true, and God's grace is flourishing in your soul, you will not be long held in the dilemma. You will take the case before God. You will say as David did, "Bring here the ephod," and your Urim and your Thummim shall be with the Holy One, and you shall hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way, walk you in it." It may be providence will block up one of the two roads and point to the other; or your judgment being further enlightened, you shall see that the one is right and the other wrong; or, perhaps some stress shall be put upon your soul, so that, though you hardly know why, you will feel that you must choose the right and leave the wrong. There are no dilemmas out of which you shall not be delivered if you live near to God, and your heart is kept warm with holy love. He goes not amiss who goes in the company of God. Like Enoch you walk with God, and you cannot mistake your road.

The path of doctrine, also, is sometimes difficult. He who understands divine truth will, I am sure, be led to confess that he does not know everything; the man who knows nothing about the truth of God, thinks he can twist the doctrines around his finger, and in a moment tell what is orthodox and what is heterodox. The true disciple of Jesus Christ often approaches a statement of the revealed word with awe and reverence, desiring to ascertain what the mind of God is about it. A truth often so nearly verges upon an error that the path is as narrow as a razor's edge, and only the Spirit of God can lead a man there. There is a path which the eagle's eye has not seen, the penetration of intellect cannot discover, the lion's whelp has not trodden—all the force of a man's mind has not been able to lead him into it; but if we wait upon God, He will show us the way. I believe that a spiritual mind is an orthodox mind. There is not much fear of our embracing any serious errors in the head when the heart is not in error, for there it is that heresies are born and bred, in that witch's caldron of our heart. Let the heart be constantly kept at the foot of the cross, and let the Holy Spirit bedew it with His sacred Influence, and though we may for a little time, through our lack of mental capacity, fail to understand the truth, it will not be for long. The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth, and thus the text shall be fulfilled, "The Lord shall guide you continually," whether as relating to matters of providence or to matters of doctrinal instruction.

So shall it be likewise *in matters of spiritual experience*. Our experience often seems to be as though it had no rule. There is method in some men's madness, but it does appear as if there is no method in our experience. Today we are on the mountain, blessed of God with full assurance—tomorrow we are in the glens beneath the dark shadow, wondering why, and asking if God has forgotten to be gracious. As when a child on a slate draws zigzag lines everywhere, but straight lines nowhere, so has it seemed with our life—as if we were farther back now than when we started. Our path has been like that of Israel in the wilderness, when the Lord led them about, but yet it is added that He guided them and instructed them. Brothers and sisters, if we are enabled by divine grace to seek close and vital union with Christ, and to live upon Him daily and continually, we may rest assured that whether our experience is gloomy or delightful, whether our inward conflicts or joys are paramount, He will still be at the helm, and will guide us continually.

As I turned over this sentence I could not help feeling that it was like a wafer made of honey! It is all honey! "The Lord shall guide you." Not an angel, but JEHOVAH shall guide you. He said He would not go through the wilderness before His people, an angel should go before them to lead them in the way; but Moses said, "If Your presence go not with us, carry us not up from here." Christian, God has not left you in your earthly pilgrimage to an angel's guidance; He Himself will lead the van. You may not see the cloudy, fiery pillar, but Jehovah shall never forsake you. Jehovah shall guide you continually. Notice the word *shall*—"The Lord *shall* guide you." How certain this makes it! How sure it is that God will not forsake us! His precious "shalls" and "wills" are better than men's oaths. "I will never leave nor forsake you." In one place He puts in five negatives, "I will not leave you; I will never, never, never, forsake you."—

"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake."

Then observe that adverb "continually." We are not to be guided only sometimes, but we are to have a perpetual monitor; not occasionally to be left to our own understanding, and so to wander. but we are continually to hear the guiding voice of the Great Shepherd; and as we follow close at His heels we shall not err, but be led by a right way to a city to dwell in. You have been, perhaps, in a maze, and you know how difficult it is to find your way to the center. But sometimes there is one perched aloft who sees the whole of the maze spread out before him like a map, and he calls out to you to turn either to the right or to the left, and if you attend to his directions you soon find the way. Even so the maze of life is only a maze to us, but God can see it all. He who rules over all, looks down upon it as men look down upon a map; and if we will but look to Him, and if our communion is constantly kept up we shall never err, but

we shall come to the goal of our hopes right speedily by following His voice.

Now, brothers and sisters, if this were the whole of my sermon, and were I now to send you away, I think you would have heard enough if your faith can only grasp it. Never be afraid, my dear friend, if you have to change your position in life; if you have to relocate to distant shores; if it should happen that you are cast into poverty, or uplifted suddenly into a more responsible position than the one you now occupy; if you are thrown among strangers, or cast among foes, yet tremble not, for "the Lord shall guide you continually." This is more than the statesman can say with all his craftiness. This is more than all the cunning men can say who use their wits to plunder their fellows. This is more than the wisest man can say who trusts in his own judgment. You have infallible wisdom to direct you, immutable love to comfort you, and eternal power to defend you. "Jehovah"—mark the word—"*Jehovah* shall guide you continually."

II. The second blessing promised in the text is one which I trust we have enjoyed, and which some of us are enjoying even now—it is INWARD SATISFACTION.

"And satisfy your soul in drought." It is a blessed thing to have the soul satisfied, for the soul is of great capacity. The whole world, someone has said, cannot fill a man's eye, because a man's eye can see so much; how much more, if it is the expression of his inward perception, is it true that the world cannot fill it. The soul is like the grave, it is never satisfied; it is like the horseleech which always cries, "Give, give!" Lay your money-bags to your heart, and see if they will satisfy you; but your poor soul will say, "How can I be satisfied with this dull earth? What is there here to feed the soul with?" As well bring stones to a horse, as bring gold to a soul. There is nothing for a soul to feed upon in all the pomp of kings and pride of men—these are no food for the soul! As well feed eagles upon clods, as hope to feed immortal souls upon anything that is of the earth. The soul needs more than all this, but the Christian has what his soul needs.

He has, in the first place, *a removal of all that which marred his peace, blighted his prospects, and made his soul empty and hungry.* His *sin* is pardoned; he is reconciled to God; he is at peace with the Most High. The soul is never satisfied till it can place its head in the bosom of the Great Father of Spirits, and this the Christian can do. He is satisfied with God's dispensations. He believes that the present will work for his good and the future too, even as the past has done. He is satisfied with God's love. It is a rich feast to him to know that God loves him. It is an infinite joy to the Christian to believe that he is one with Christ, that he is accepted in and through Jesus, that he is a member of His body, and is united to Him, part of His flesh and of His bones. It is a satisfaction to the Christian to know that the Holy Spirit dwells in him, and that his body is a temple for the indwelling of Deity. He is satisfied with promises of God that can

never be broken, with covenants that can never be violated, with oaths that stand fast like mountains, and with the words of God which are great as the fathomless sea. He is satisfied with his God. The consequence of such a satisfaction as this is that the Christian is as well-satisfied at one time as at another, if his soul is right. You see the text says that he shall be satisfied in times of drought. Louth, I believe, translates the word, "severest droughts." The word seems to apply to places constantly subject to lack of moisture, as well as seasons exceptionally dry; yet it is in the plural, the Hebrew plural being used to intensify as well as to multiply, so that it really reads thus—"In the worst times of distress the Christian is still satisfied." There are some houses in London which would tumble down if you were to remove those on either side that help to support them, but there are other houses which are self-contained; you might pull all the houses in the parish down if you liked, but it would not hurt them. Now, the most of men in this world are like houses in a row, they lean one upon another, they are kept up by carnal comforts; but the Christian is self-sustained, and does not lean upon any arm of flesh. You ask, "What about his wealth?" Well, he is rich in faith, and if all his property were gone, he would still say, "I have not lost my God." "But what about his family?" Well, he loves them, and if they were taken away he would weep as other men weep—no, he would weep, but *not* as other men would weep—I may correct myself—for he would say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He would still feel that he had not lost his Elder Brother, that he had not lost his heavenly Father, and that he was not an orphan in the world. "Well, but how about his health?" Well, he prizes that, but if pains of body distress him, and he should be stretched upon a sick bed, he has a little secret, which he cannot tell you, but which he knows himself, and which enables him to be more healthy when he is sick than he is when he is in health, and to sing God's praises more sweetly sometimes in a cage of ill health than he did when he was in the open field of vigor; for many of God's birds sing best in cages, fly best when their wings are broken, get nearest to heaven when they are rolled right down to the earth, and discern most of God, and see most of Him when they have lost the tokens of His love.

You know we can see many things in the dark which we cannot see in the light; I question, indeed, whether we do not see even more in the dark than we do in the light; that is to say, we can see all those starry worlds, those unnumbered orbs floating in distant space—we can see them when the light is gone, but we cannot see them by day. So, when outward lights are taken away, the Christian often perceives more instead of less, through the inward light and the light of heaven which God is pleased to give him. Is it not a blessed thing, dear friends, to have a heavenly constitution, a satisfaction which does not depend upon outward circumstances? To be satisfied in times of plenty, why, any fool can

do that! But to be satisfied in days of drought, this is the Christian's privilege, for he can say, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." When the rancher walks out among his cattle, and sees them all in good health, and promising a good return, a fine investment for his labors, it is very easy for him to say, "Bless the Lord!" But when the cattle plague comes and empties all his stalls, and there are great heaps out in the field to show where the cattle are all buried, and there has been no compensation for them—how now, rancher? Can you now praise God and be satisfied in times of drought? And you, friend, when you have good employment, and wages are high, and the house is well-furnished, and the cupboard is full, it is very easy then for you to kneel down at family prayer and thank God for His kindness; but how about when the husband is sick, when the funds have got very low, and when the little children look at their father wondering where the next meal will come from? To be satisfied even then that it is all right! Oh this is a grand thing! This is the mark of difference between the Christian and the worldling. The worldling blesses God while He gives him plenty, but the Christian blesses Him when He smites him—the Christian believes God to be too wise to err and too good to be unkind; he trusts Him where he cannot trace Him, looks up to Him in the darkest hour, and believes that all is well. O Christian, if your heart is right, you will understand this spiritual satisfaction, and your soul will be satisfied in times of drought.

III. The next blessing is SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND HAPPINESS.

"And make fat your bones." Note the figure. It is not "make fat your flesh." I am anything but sure that that would be a blessing in any sense. Certainly it is rather harmful than blessed, understanding it metaphorically, for when Jeshurun waxed fat he kicked. Sometimes abundance in earthly things makes poverty in heavenly things. External richness and strength are often the signs of weakness in the inner man. But fatness here is to be upon the man's hardest and most necessary part of his frame. A man is really built up when his bones, the solid pillars of the house of his manhood, have been strengthened. Vigor has been put into his constitution where it was most required. His bones have been renovated and made strong. Oh, it is a grand thing when the soul is thus in spiritual health, when the bones are made fat! Do you know what it means, Christian? It is when you take a promise of God and it is applied with power, and you can feed on it; when you take a precept and feel the strength granted, by God's grace, to go and fulfill it; when you turn to God's purpose and decree, and rejoice in them, seeing that you have a fair portion in them; or turning to God's testimonies concerning your dai-

ly walk, you find just as much comfort in these as you did in those, and can bless God for ability given you to serve as well as for power to enjoy.

I have lately read in the newspaper—I am sure I do not know whether to believe that it is true—an account of a youth in France, 20 years of age, who has been laying asleep for a fortnight, nourished only upon a little gruel given with a spoon, and that he was in the same state a year ago for nearly a month. Whether this has actually occurred to anybody or not, I have known many cases of Christians who have hid like that spiritually, not for a fortnight only, but for a whole year; no, and not only for a year, but it is their general state! They come on Sunday and we have to feed them a little gruel with a spoon, and this lasts them till the next time there is a service. They live on nothing but thin liquid, and as might be expected, they have no strength. If you listen to them, you will hear them saying such words as these—

"'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?"

They have no more health than that! Oh, that they could get strong! Oh, that God would make fat their bones, and then they would be able to sing Toplady's hymn—

"My name from the palm of His hands,
Eternity cannot erase;
Impressed on His heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace.
Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
Are the glorified spirits in heaven."

May we get out of a state of spiritual sickness, and may our bones grow fat, so that we may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might!

The figure seems to me to indicate two or three things in one. There is health here, the soul is purged from its vices, sicknesses, and unbelief, pride, sloth, and such like. There is vigor here, no lukewarmness, being neither cold nor hot, no laxity nor indifference. There is growth—the man is not stunted; he does not think that he has come to perfection, and may therefore stop where he is. His bones grow fat. Inward satisfaction seems to be couched in the figure; the man is happy, perfectly happy; he is always rejoicing; he is not lean with fretting, but fattened with the oil of joy.

Now, dear Christian brothers and sisters, I would earnestly ask you not to be content without the enjoyment of this blessing; for the more one looks upon the world, the more one is convinced that Christian joy is, after all, Christian strength—doubts and fears cut the very foundations of Christian power. Strong faith is that which wins the victory, while unbelief deprives us of all hope of conquest, and lays us groveling in the mire beneath the feet of our own very weakest foe. Oh, for more of

this holy joy! I have told you how to get it. Fulfill the conditions we referred to in the former part of this discourse, and then you shall have your bones made fat.

IV. The fourth blessing is this, "AND YOU SHALL BE LIKE A WATERED GARDEN." This figure of a garden is a very sweet and attractive one. I need not tell you how much taste may be displayed and how much pleasure may be derived from the cultivation of such plots of ground. Our fancy is soon at work to invent a picture of flower beds, and fruit trees, shady walks, and pleasant fountains, laid out close to some grand mansion, and opening its fairest views to the best apartments of the palace. Such a garden needs constant care, and then, although it may be more beautiful at one season than another, it will never be like a wild heath, or totally bereft of charms. But alas, some professors of religion are not like this—there is little evidence of diligent cultivation in their character. Instead of flowers of some kind all the year round, it is hard to say that they ever show much bloom—you would never expect fruits from them. But, dear brothers and sisters, you know that it is a comely thing for every Christian church, whether it is a large mansion or a little villa, to have a garden surrounding it so that you may look out from the windows and see the various walks and the different plants that flourish there. I have seen some gardens attached to small houses where the owner has portioned off little plots to each member of his family. And thus I believe the home has been made more pleasant and happy. But oh, it is always a good thing when every member of the church has a spot to engage his heart and hands, and when they can all look with so much more satisfaction upon the tender blossoms and the full-blown flowers because they have watched and tended and watered the plants with a ministry of love. This though is merely a hint by the way. It is not the exact meaning of the passage before us. Your own soul is to be under cultivation. The heavenly gardener shall rejoice in your blooms.

An African traveler tells us, that he has often seen the contrast between an unwatered garden and a watered garden, and has been much surprised at it. In the case of the watered garden there may be a spring just outside of it, and the master has diligently brought in the water every morning, or every evening, poured it into a trench, and made it run along, and so the plant receives the moisture, and bears fruit, forming a pleasant contrast to the arid desert outside. But there is another garden, with similar plants, apparently selected with the same care, but as it has not been watered, the traveler says that he has frequently observed the holes where the plant should be, without a vestige of the plant that has been perceptible. There was the trench where the water should have flowed; there were the paths in the garden; there was everything except this—there was no life, because there was no water. O Christians, you know what this means! When the Holy Spirit visits God's people, they are like a garden that is watered every day. They are green and flourishing,

and their graces are an honor to the God who nourished them. But, if the Holy Spirit is taken away from them how different it is! If He were utterly withdrawn from us—which, thank God, He will not be—we would be just like the wilderness from which we were taken, and not a vestige of divine grace would remain. Christian, as all depends upon the watering of the Spirit, so make it a matter of soul-concern with you to be watered continually by God's grace. Oh, do not trust to the stock you have, for it will fail you! Do not rely upon what your soul may find within itself as being its own wisdom and strength, or you will be deceived; but go to the Lord, and pray that you may be as a watered garden—not as a garden only, but as a *watered* garden. So may each one of us do.

V. Furthermore, there is the blessing of CONTINUED STRENGTH, CONTINUED FRESHNESS, CONTINUED SUPPLY.

"As a spring of water whose waters fail not." There are many wells in the East which do fail, and many apparent springs which deceive the traveler. I observe that the margin has it, "whose waters deceive not, or lie not." When a caravan comes to a well, if there is no water in it the travelers are deceived; and if the farmer should come to a reservoir and find that the water is all gone, then the reservoir has lied to him and deceived him. And how many a man who has appeared like a Christian has been but a mere deceiver! We looked into his conversation, where there should have been a savor of godliness, but we found none. We hoped that in his actions he would be like the Master whom he professed to serve, but we saw none of that Master's likeness. We trusted that when he came into communion with the church, he would add to its comfort and its usefulness, but he has merely added to its numbers, and has been an encumbrance upon its march. He has been a deceiver; his waters have lied to us.

Not so God's true people; they shall not deceive. They shall have so much divine grace that when a Christian friend expects to find grace in them, he shall not be disappointed. He shall be refreshed by their conversation; he shall be encouraged by their holy example. A spring of water is not dependent upon anything beyond itself. Deep down in the caverns of the earth great treasures of water have been prepared by God, and the spring subsists upon its own secret source. And so does the Christian. God has provided in the covenant a depth of living water. It is one of the blessings pronounced upon Israel's sons. Christ Himself has declared that he who drinks of the water of life shall find it in him, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The reservoir must be filled at certain times, and then it gets dry, but the spring is filled from itself. So the Christian is not dependent upon the ordinances. He thrives upon them, but he is not dependent upon them. If, by providence, he is denied the use of them, he has a spring within; no, he has a spring in the secret depths of the eternal love of God which wells up within him at all times, so that he becomes as "a spring of water, whose waters fail not." I

do not know how some people, who believe that a Christian can fall from grace, manage to be happy. It must be a very commendable thing in them to be able to get through a day without despair. If I did not believe the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, I think I should be, of all men, the most miserable, because I would lack any ground of comfort. Certainly I would not be able to understand this text. I could not say whatever state of heart I came into, I should be like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. I would rather have to take the comparison of an intermittent spring that might stop on a sudden, or a reservoir which we had no reason to expect would always be full.

If I speak to any Christian who has not received the doctrine of final perseverance, I ask him to look it once more in the face. Do you not think that when the Savior says, "But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," the interpretation of the figure necessitates the belief that divine grace is an enduring thing which cannot be destroyed? Does not the metaphor of the text, to understand it fully, seem to require you to believe that the grace which God puts into men will continue there, will have in itself, through its divine origin, a force and a vitality which will make it continue to spring up as the well does, without any outward pumping, or without any need of fresh supply from the depths of Deity? The Christian should be satisfied, and his piety should never come to an end. Come then, let us wrap our cloak about us with a word of joy and comfort, and go our way into the cold, bleak world, rejoicing that if our hearts are right, we are resting upon the source of every precious thing. Let us go forth and rejoice that we have within us a life that can never die; that we have a something within us that can satisfy us in the worst of times; that God is with us, to be our guide and our dear companion. Being the favored sons of heaven, and the heirs of Immortality, let us eat our bread with joy; let us cheer our poverty with hope; let us make glad our times of trial with holy rejoicing. Let us rejoice in the Lord always, and shout for joy, and so may His blessed Spirit help us to live to His glory.

I can only regret that such a text as this can have no bearing upon some of my hearers. There are some of you to whom we shall have to read the text in the negative. "You shall *not* be guided by God, for you shall follow your own devices, and they shall lead you down to death and to the gates of hell." O unconverted sinner, tremble at this! You shall *not* be satisfied. There shall come a day of drought that shall dry up your body, though you flourished as a green herb. There shall come a time when your pleasures shall be of no use to you, when the hollow cheek and the blinding eye shall bring no comfort to you from without, but shall only work the end of all your joy. The text does not say that your bones shall be made fat—your flesh may be made fat, but only that you may be fattened for the slaughter. You may have outward good, but only

that you may be more wretched when you have to go and leave it; and there shall be no inward peace, no spiritual joy. There is no promise to you that *you* shall be a watered garden. You will not ask of God, and you shall not have. You do not knock, and the door shall not be opened. You do not seek, and you shall not find. You shut your ear against God, and He will shut His ear against you. You refused the cross of Christ, and therefore you shall lose the crown of heaven, and shall not know joy, because you do not know heart-sorrow. You do not hate sin, you shall not, therefore, enjoy the bliss of the righteousness of Christ. And you shall *not* be as a spring of water whose waters fail not. The little joy you have, all brackish as it is, shall be denied you at the last. You shall cry for a drop of water to cool your tongue, but you shall find none. Oh, terrible is your *present* state, but more terrible by far is the future which looms in the distance! Do you not hear the breaking of the waves of the unknown sea? You must go down into it! Do you not even now hear the booming of its awful billows upon the cliffs of time? What if it should be a sea of fire to you forever? What if every billow in that sea of flame should break over you, and you are cast into it, but not drowned, shipwrecked and lost, but not annihilated? What if you must be drifting forever across that fiery sea, with the word of divine Wrath driving you on, never to find a haven? Sinner, there is yet hope! This is not the realm of despair. Not yet has the great iron key grated in the lock to shut you forever in the dungeon. It is said of Christ that, "He opens and no man shuts." He can open heaven to you. Trust Him with your whole heart, mourning for sin and hating it. Rest in His blood! Find a shelter beneath His cross, and He will not, *cannot* cast you away, for "He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him." May you so come, and then may your Christian life be filled with happiness, and overflowing with joy, so that you may sing in the words of David, with which I close—"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 58.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

GOD—ALL IN ALL
NO. 737

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 24, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble? And when He hides His face, who then can behold Him? Whether it is done against a nation, or against a man only."
Job 34:29.

WE commenced our special services with a sermon of encouragement, by which we were reminded of the rapid answer which Daniel received to his prayer, [Sermon #734—*The Dawn of Revival, Or Prayer Speedily Answered*] and were led to hope that the Lord intended, at the very commencement of our supplications, to send forth a commandment of mercy. Since then, God has done great things for us, of which we are glad. Few of you, probably, are aware of the numerous conversions which God has worked in this place during the past two weeks. We are not fond of publishing numbers, or of making estimates, but it suffices you to know, and us to say, that the Lord has made bare His arm and led forth captive souls from the bondage of sin. Many fathers and mothers here have had to weep for joy, because their children have declared themselves to be on the Lord's side. Satan's kingdom has been weakened, and the armies of the Lord have been increased. There has been joy among the angels *this week,* and joy in the heart of the great Father; for many lost ones have been found. Let us give unto the Lord the glory which is due unto His name; let us rejoice and be glad in the Lord. And now, halting in the midst of our career, like an army with uplifted banners, resting on the wing like a lark when mounting towards heaven, let us give a tongue to our gratitude, and sing aloud unto God our strength. We cheerfully confess that neither our own arm nor our own strength can give us the victory. Unto Jehovah be all glory. Let us hear the voice which says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord," and let each believer here prostrate himself in reverence before the throne of the great King, and thank Him with heart and soul for all the mercy and goodness which He has made to pass before us. With one united heart let us ascribe unto the Lord honor and glory, and dominion and power. This grateful waiting upon the Lord will renew our strength in such a manner, that though we run, we shall not be weary, and though we walk, and the walk is long and the road is rough, we shall not faint. Waiting upon the Lord does not give us a merely spasmodic energy with which we may begin and continue for a little season, and then grow cold; but waiting upon the Lord gives a constant flow of vigor, so that we go from strength to strength until in Zion we appear before God.

This topic seemed to thrust itself upon me as most suitable for our consideration during our present special efforts. My intention is, as God shall help me, to magnify the name of the Lord our God by directing your devout attention to the fact that without the Lord there is nothing good, nothing strong, nothing effectual; but where He works nothing can stand against Him—no powers of evil can impede the workings of his royal hand.

Our entire dependence upon God, who is our all in all—that is the thought of the morning, and that thought the text illustrates in two ways. We are made to see the all-sufficiency of God to us, and our dependence upon Him—*first, in His effectual working,* "When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?" *Secondly, in His sovereign withdrawals,* "When He hides His face, who then can behold Him?" And, *thirdly, we are reminded that this is true not only upon the small scale of the individual, but upon the great scale of nations,* "Whether it is done against a nation, or against a man only."

I. First, then, the eye of faith beholds the all-sufficiency of Jehovah, and our entire dependence upon Him, as she marks HIS EFFECTUAL WORKING. "When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?"

This unanswerable question may be illustrated by the Lord's works in nature. The world was once a tumultuous chaos—fire and wind and vapor strove with one another; contention and confusion ruled the day. Who was there who could bring that heaving, foaming, and boiling, raging mass into quietude and order? Who could transform that sea of molten lava into rock solid as granite, fit to become the foundations of a habitable globe? Who could cool that boiling surface into an Eden where God might walk with man at the cool of the day? Who could calm that ocean of fire, lashed into terrific tempest by whirlwind and tornado, and make it into a *terra firma,* fixed and stable? The Holy Spirit brooded upon it, and by His mysterious energy before long He brought order out of confusion; and now this fair round world of ours, with all its matchless beauty of landscape and rolling flood, fixed and firm, has become a standing proof that when *God* gives quietness, none can disturb it. Only let the great Preserver of men relax the command of quiet, and there are fierce forces in the interior of the earth sufficient to bring it back to its primeval chaos in an hour; but while His fiat is for peace, we fear no crash of matter and no wreck of worlds. Seed time and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat do not cease; the economy of man's era remains beneath the calm radiance of sun and moon unmolested by the fear of returning chaos or the rebellion of terrific elements. Passing on to the age of man, we see the Lord in the day of His wrath pulling up the sluices of the great deep, and at the same moment bidding the clouds of heaven discharge themselves, so that the whole world became once again a colossal ruin; the proud waters went over the abodes of men and even the tops of the mountains were covered by the imperious billows. The Lord had but to will it, and the waters were eased from off the face of the earth, and once again the dry land appeared while the world bloomed with joyous springs, blushed with fairest summers, and with glad ripening autumns, while overall, the

covenant rainbow was seen in the clouds, the token that the Lord had given quietness to the earth, and that none again should be able to disturb her. Have the proud waters prevailed since that day? Has the sea dared to leave its appointed channel? Do not the waves in their greatest fury pause when they reach the boundary appointed by the Most High? Tempest and storm obey the voice of the Lord who sits upon the flood, the Lord who sits King forever.

Further down in history the Red Sea asks of us the same question, "When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?" He led His people forth from Egypt's bondage, but Pharaoh said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil." He had, however, reckoned without the Lord of Hosts; and when the pillar came between the two armies, turning its black dark side to Pharaoh's horsemen, and its side of brightness and of comfort to Israel's ranks, then there might have been heard a voice, "When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?" When down into the depths of the sea the ransomed flock descended, the floods stood upright as a heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea, the rattling chariot was heard and the horse hoofs sounded on the pebbly bed of the frightened sea. Will not Pharaoh break the peace of the chosen flock, and drive them back to slavery? Hark to the cracking of whips and the shouts of the horsemen! How is it now with Israel? Wait, O Unbelief, and see the salvation of God! When the mighty waters cover all the hosts of Egypt there comes up from the depths where the proud warriors sleep with the waves as their winding sheets, "When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?"

Glancing far on in history, and passing by a thousand cases which are all to the point, we only mention one more, namely, that of Sennacherib and his host. The marbles which are preserved to us, and have been excavated from the heaps of Nineveh, are more than sufficient proofs of the power and of the ferocity of the Assyrian monarch. He came even to Lachish, destroying the nations with fire and sword, and then he sent his Lieutenant, Rabshakeh, to Jerusalem, to overthrow it. Rabshakeh scarcely thought that little city to be worth the toils of battle—he thought to conquer it with his blasphemous tongue, and leave the sword in its scabbard; he thought to swallow it as a dog swallows his meat; to devour it as an ox eats grass. How scornfully, he asked—"Who is Jehovah?" How he boasted of the easy overthrow of the gods of the heathen. "Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" But the Lord had heard his blasphemies and answered the prayers of Hezekiah, and all the force of Assyria could not cast a single mound against Jerusalem, nor shoot an arrow there, but in the stillness of the night God put a hook into the enemy's nose and thrust a bridle between his jaws, and sent him back with shame to the place from where he came. "When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?"—

"There is a stream whose gentle flow

Supplies the city of our God,
Life, love, and joy, still gliding through,
And watering our secure abode."

"Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: your eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes there shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords there be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; where shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass there. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; He will save us. Your tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided: the lame take the prey." They who hoped to spoil Jerusalem are spoiled themselves, and the robbers who thought to destroy the peace of the Church of God, have their own peace and their own lives taken from them.

All history declares the truth of God that when God determines to set a hedge around any people, it is not possible for any power, human or infernal, to break through that hedge. "I will be a wall of fire round about you, and a glory in your midst," is a blessed promise which ensures quietness to those who dwell within its glorious protection.

1. We shall reflect upon this truth of God as it applies, first, *to God's people.* My beloved, if your gracious Lord shall give you quietness of mind, who then can cause you trouble? Some of us know what it is to walk in the light of Jehovah's countenance. Let us now bear our experimental witness to this fact. You have had, my dearly beloved in the Lord, stern *tribulations;* you have seen wave after wave rolling up and threatening to go over you; and all these billows have gone over your head; you have been deserted by friends—they have been unfaithful; you have lost kindred—you have wept over their tombs; you have lost property—your gold and silver have taken to themselves wings and fled away; you have been broken in health, and you have been broken in spirit too; but when the Lord has lifted up the light of His countenance upon you, were you not of the same mind as Habakkuk, that—"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls," yet still you could rejoice in God? Beloved, a glimpse of our heavenly Father's face even sweetens affliction**—**

"The bitterest tears,
If He smiles but on them,
Like dew in the sunshine,
Grow diamond and gem."

We have found it sweet to be afflicted when we have enjoyed the presence of God in it, so that we have counted it all joy when we have fallen into different temptations; because, in our hour of extremity and peril, the Savior has been unspeakably the more precious—in the absence of all other joys, the joy of the Lord has filled the soul to the brim. You know very well, dear friends, that if the Lord is withdrawn, no comforts can make up for His absence; but if all earthly comforts are taken, you

will not utter so much as a single murmuring word if the Lord will but fill the vacuum with Himself, you will say, "Lord, I thank You that there was more room for You—more room for Your fullness—when the creature failed me."

Added to this, when the Lord gives quietness, *slander* cannot give us trouble. It has always been the lot of God's people, the more they have served God, the more falsely to be accused of men. And I doubt not, that when the dog is barking, he imagines that the good man who rides by is sorely troubled by the noise; and yet, if the Lord does but smile, it little matters though every tongue in the world should be set a-lying against us, and every mouth should be black with curses, we may then say as David did—"They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city," and then he adds, "Let them return, and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city." So would the Christian give a license to those who slander him. If it were not for the sin of it on the part of his enemies, he could even rejoice to be evilly spoken of for Christ's sake, and count it all joy when he was shamefully treated for his Master's cause. The face of God sheds such a holy light into the soul that the clouds of slander cannot hide it. Yes, and at such times you may add to outward troubles and to the slanders of the wicked man, all *the temptations of the devil;* but if the Lord gives quietness, though there were as many devils to attack us as there are stones in the pavement of the streets of London, we would walk over all their heads in unabated confidence. Let satanic temptations come; let them fly about as thick as hailstones, if God but lifts up the shield, they shall be but as hailstones that rattle on the roof while the man is safe beneath. Perhaps you think Luther's expressions, when he speaks about the temptations of Satan, to be too highly drawn; and so they may be in your experience, but they were not in his, and he stands as a monument, in his biography, of the power of the comforts of God to keep a man calm when all earth and all hell are against him. There was Luther. It did not matter that the enraged Pope issued a thousand bulls; that every priest gnashed his teeth at Luther; that most of men cried, "Away with him! It is not fit that he should live." What cared Luther any more for all they said than for the chirping of so many grasshoppers in the field, or the croaking of so many frogs in the pond? Let them say what they will, "if God gives quietness, who then can make trouble?"

I know that I am now touching the experience of many of God's people, but I will go a little further. Even *inbred sin*, which is the worst of ills, will cause the Christian no trouble when the light of Jehovah's countenance is clearly seen. "Oh," says the soul, "I cried but yesterday, 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' And there I stopped. But now, my God has whispered in my ear, 'You are Mine,' and I will not stop at that verse any longer, but I will go on to the next. 'I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord.' 'Thanks be unto God who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ,' I will no longer look upon my enemies and say, 'They are many and strong,' but I will look to my strong helper, 'and in the name of the Lord I will destroy

them.'" "I am as a wonder unto many; but You are my strong refuge," said David; and so will the Christian say. Beset with all sorts of temptations from within, yet he overcomes through the blood of the Lamb. And God gives such a quietness in resting in the finished work of Jesus, and in the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit that, imperfect as we are, we yet have power by His Might to seize the crown of righteousness and to be raised up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, even before the day of glory shall dawn, and the shadows of mortality flee away.

2. Beloved friends, I thank God that my text is equally true of the *seeking sinner*. If the Lord shall be pleased to give you, poor troubled heart, quietness this day in Christ, none can make trouble in your soul. What a mercy it is for you that God can give you peace and quietness! Some of you have been, during the last fortnight, much troubled. The arrows of God are sticking fast in you; your very flesh faints as though it could not much longer bear the strain of your spiritual griefs. Now the Lord can bind you up. He will bind up the broken in heart, and heal their wounds. He can do it effectually, so effectually that no wound ever bleeds afresh after He has bound it up. "Ah," you say, "but there is His *law*, that dreadful law of ten commands—I have broken them a thousand times." But if the Savior leads you to the cross He will show you that He fulfilled the law on your behalf; that you are not yourself under the law any longer, but under grace. The law is a taskmaster; but the taskmaster can only rule his own slaves; and when you believe in Jesus, you are no more a slave, but a child, and the taskmaster has no further power over you from now on and forever. To see the law fulfilled by Christ, what a sight is that! It is a vision which gives such joy and grace that you could stand where the seer of Horeb stood, and need not say as he did, "I do exceedingly fear and quake," but rather say, with our hymn-writer—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who at all to my charge can lay?
Fully absolved through Christ I am
From sin's tremendous curse and blame."

"Yes, yes," you say, "well, I thank God for that, but my conscience, my conscience will never let me be in quietness." Oh, but my Master knows how to talk with your conscience! He can say to it, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins." He can take His precious blood, which is better than the balm of Gilead, and He can apply it to the wounds of your conscience; and as soon as conscience feels the power of the blood, all its wounds close up directly, and the heart rejoices, saying, "If Jesus paid my debts, then paid they are; if Jesus died for me, then God will never make me die and Jesus too; for payment He will never demand twice—first at my bleeding Surety's hands, and then at mine." When conscience enters into the wounds of Christ, how happy it is! It is like the dove that dwells in the cleft of the rock, and builds its nest there, and sits all day uttering its soft turtle notes for very joy and gladness. O poor heart, Mr. Conscience and you will shake hands well enough if you will stand at the foot of the cross and do it. Conscience is a dreadful thunderer to a sinner unreconciled; but,

to a sinner who has seen the great atonement, and felt the power of the blood, conscience becomes a generous friend.

And let me say, dear friend, if the Lord gives you quietness so the law and conscience will be at peace with you, so will that *Book of God* be. Some of you, whenever you turn the Bible over, can find nothing but threats in it. Each page cries out against you, "I bear a curse for you." Oh, but if you can only come to Jesus and rest in Him, then the page shall glisten with blessings, and glow with benedictions; you shall find that it utters peace to the men of peace, and good tidings of great joy to those who look alone to the Redeemer's blood! Still I think I see you shake your head and say sorrowfully, "Oh, but I shall never get much quietness at home, for I have *ungodly friends,* and they tell me I am religion-mad." Ah, my dear friend! If the Lord gives you quietness, your ungodly friends will give you very little trouble, for you will have grace to bear with them. If they shall revile you, you will turn their reviling into joy, thanking God that you are accounted worthy to be reviled for Jesus' sake; and in the midst of it you will sometimes take an opportunity of speaking a good word for your Master, and so be thankful that you are placed where you are needed. We ought to be glad to be cast as a pound of salt amid the corruption which salt destroys; and we should be thankful that we are set as a light in a dark place, where a lamp is most required. In this light the persecuted believer may even look upon his painful position as a desirable one, for the practical usefulness which it puts in his way.

If Jesus Christ is your companion, you may walk unharmed through Vanity Fair, if your path should lie through it, and you need not care for all the fools that pluck at your garment. Through a shower of mud it is safe and blessed traveling if Jesus is our companion. I hope you are not one of those who would choose to walk with Him in silver slippers, but who would leave Him if He came in poverty and shame! If so, you do not know the love of Jesus at all. Through briars and thorns lies the path of love, and yet that thorny road is paradise if Jesus does but tread it with us and permit us to lean upon His arm. The more severe the troubles of life become, the higher shall your comforts rise if Jesus is with you. Tried soul, rest in Jesus! Only cast yourself on Him, confide entirely in Him, and you shall find that the peace which He gives you none can take from you.

3. Now this text, which thus belongs to the saint and to the seeking sinner, I think is equally true, on the larger scale, to the *Christian Church.* I could not omit saying this out of thankfulness to God for the quietness which He has for years been pleased to give to us as a Christian community. During 13 years and more we have been knit together as one man, while we have lived to see certain sects that were "the one and only church"—that railed almost with the mouth of a Sanballat and Tobiah at all other Christians as worldly schematics, while they themselves were Scriptural, immaculate, *the* "brethren," *the* "perfect ones"—we have seen them torn to pieces till there is scarcely a remnant of them left, with all the elements within them of internal discord, which will

dash them yet more completely into shivers. By the grace of God we who, as a single Church, are almost as numerous as some of their parties, have been kept in holy peace and quietness, working incessantly for the cause of God without dissension and without strife; and though we are not free from thousands of faults, yet I have often admired the goodness of God which has enabled us to hold with a hearty grip each other by the hand, and say, "We love each other for Jesus' sake, and for the truth's sake, and hope each of us to live in each other's love till we die, wishing, if it were possible, to be buried side by side." I do thank God for this, because I know there is more than enough of evil among us to plant a root of bitterness in our midst. We who bear office in the Church have the same nature as others; and therefore, naturally, every man of us would seek to have the supremacy, and every man, if left to himself, would also indulge an angry temper, and find many reasons for differing from his brother. We have all been offended often, and have as often offended others. We are as imperfect a band of men as might be found, but we are one. We have each had to put up with the other, and to bear and forbear; and it does appear to me a wonder that so many imperfect people should get on so well for so long. I read over the door of our Tabernacle this text—"When the Lord gives quietness, who then can make trouble?" When some of our members were first taken into the Church, the pastor was greatly criticized by some. It was said, "Well, if Mr. Spurgeon receives such a man who has been so great a trouble in *our* Church, then he will be the beginning of wars at the Tabernacle." But those very persons who came with that doubtful character have become the most zealous of our working community, and instead of differing and disagreeing, have felt that there is so much to do that it would be a pity to spend one grain of strength in quarrelling with other children of God! How good it is to use our swords upon the devil and his allies, and not to blunt their edges upon our fellow Christians! Possibly, my brethren, many of you do not sufficiently prize the peace which reigns in our Church. Ah, you would value it if you lost it! Oh, how would you prize it if strife and schism should come in! You would look back upon these happy days we have had together with intense regret, and say, "Lord, knit us together in unity again; send us love to each other once more," for in a Church, love is the essential element of happiness; and if any of you have violated it, or sinned against it, ask for grace to repent of your mistake, and let us "love one another with a pure heart fervently," walking in love, "as Christ also has loved us and gave Himself for us." Let us have that fervent charity which is the perfect bond, abounding in our hearts yet more and more by Jesus Christ.

I shall leave this first point when I have briefly drawn three lessons from it. "When the Lord gives quietness, who then can make trouble?" The first lesson is those who have peace, should this morning adore and bless God for it. O God, when we remember what our trouble was before we knew a Savior; when we recollect what the tempest was when You did hide Your face from us, we cannot but be glad, exceedingly glad, that now You speak kindly and favorably unto us. You who will not thank

God for peace, deserve to hear war in your streets again; you who will not thank Him at the place of the drawing of water, because the noise of the archers has ceased, you deserve to have your hearts again plowed up by the hosts of the enemy. Praise Him, then, my brothers and sisters, from your hearts praise Him. Secondly, be hopeful, you who are seeking peace, whether for others or for yourselves. Do not despair of any soul, however near to death and hell it may be; God can make quietness even in the heart that is ready to die. Lastly, give up all other peace but that which the Lord gives to every believer. If you have a quietness which God has not created, implore the Lord to break it; if you have a peace which did not come from heaven, it is "peace, peace, where there is no peace," and the Lord deliver you from it.

II. Now let us turn to the second point. The all-sufficiency of God is seen, secondly, IN HIS SOVEREIGN WITHDRAWALS.

God does sometimes hide His face from His people, and then, as His saints well know, nothing can enable them to behold Him or to be happy. You know God doctrinally, but what are the doctrines of grace to a soul when God hides His face? You may accept and hold fast the orthodox gospel, but is the purest evangelical truth anything but a cloud without rain unless the Lord Himself shall appear? In vain, dear friends, is all our experience to help us see God if He hides His face, for though we have tried and proved His faithfulness, yet if He does not continue to smile, we grow to be as unbelieving and as doubting as ever we were. At such times outward mercies are all in vain. Though today we can see God's hand in the loaf of bread and in the cup of cold water, yet if God hides His face, though there should be a stalled ox before us, and a feast fit for kings, yet we should not see our Father's love in them. Christian, you know well that if God takes Himself away and hides within His secret places, and speaks no more to you, neither earth nor all the sky can afford you one delight.

Now, sinner, this is strikingly true in *your* case. If God shall be pleased to withdraw Himself from you, you cannot behold Him. If He should take the gospel from you, what then? He may do it. He may send you across the seas as an immigrant. He may put you in some country village where there is no gospel preaching. He may make you live in a situation where you cannot get out to hear a faithful gospel preacher, and then what will you do? Still worse may it be with you. The Lord may let you continue under a ministry, and the ministry may be full of blessing to others, and yet be fruitless to you. If God does but leave you to the corruptions of your own heart, dear friend, it will be quite enough to secure your ruin. Then the tears of mothers, the counsels of friends, and the appeals of pastors shall all be powerless to touch your heart; the appeals of the Book of God itself shall never move your conscience, you will go headlong to your own destruction if God withdraws His face from you. Remember, my dear hearer, this is possible! There is a point, we know not when, a place we know not where, where God may end your day of sensibility by saying, "I will leave that sinner alone." Then the cloud shall rain no more rain upon your desert soul; no more seed shall be scattered upon the

highway of your thankless heart. Shall horses run upon a rock? Shall men plow there with oxen? If you will not repent, God will not always waste the gospel ministry upon you. He shall let that gospel become a "savor of death unto death" to you, till you loathe it yourself, become a Sabbath-breaker, or give yourself up to doubt and sin. O sinner, I long that you may feel how absolutely you are in the hands of God. Should the sun go down, all the candles in the world cannot light up the landscape; and if God shall desert the soul, all human power must fail to give it comfort. What a mercy it is that the Lord has not deserted you as yet; that still does His good Spirit strive and dwell with the chief of sinners; still the cry is heard, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Yet I pray you remember that if you do harden your hearts, the Lord may do with you as He did with His people of old, and swear in His Wrath that you shall not enter into His rest.

I have no doubt, dear friends, that as this is true of the saint and the sinner, it is true of the Church. If God shall hide His face from a Church; who then can behold Him? Let me endeavor to set that truth of God in two or three words before you. If we as a Church prove unfaithful; if we let go of our first love; if we do not plead in prayer, and seek the conversion of souls, God may take away His presence from us as He has done from churches that were once His Churches, but which are not now. The traveler tells you that as he journeys through Asia Minor, he sees the ruins of those cities which once were the seven golden candlesticks, where the light of the truth of God shone brightly. What will they now say of Thyatira? Where will they find Laodicea? These have passed away, and why not *this* Church? Look at Rome, once the glory of the Christian Church, her many ministers, and her power over the world for good enormous—and now she is the place where Satan's seat is, and her synagogue is a synagogue of hell! How is this? She fell; she departed from her integrity; she left her first love, and the Lord cast her away. Thus will the Lord deal with us if thus we sin. You know that terrible passage—"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." God first of all had the tabernacle pitched at Shiloh, but Shiloh was defiled by the sin of Eli's sons; that tabernacle was taken away and Shiloh became a wilderness. So may this flourishing Church become! If justice should thus visit you, you may hold your prayer meetings—probably those will soon cease—but of what use will your formal prayers be? You may get whom you will to preach, but what of that? I know what you would do, if some of us were fallen asleep, and the faithful ones buried—if the Spirit of God were gone, you would say, "Well, we are still a large and influential congregation; we can afford to get a talented minister, money will do anything." And you would get the man of talents, and then you would want an organ and a choir, and many other pretty things which we now count it *our joy to do without.* Then, if such were the case, all these vain attempts at grandeur would be unsuccessful, and the Church would before long become a scorn and a hissing, or else a mere log upon the water. Then it would be said, "We must change the management," and there

would be this change and that change; but if the Lord were gone, what could you do? By what means could you ever make this Church to revive again, or any other Church? Alas for the carnal, spasmodic efforts we have seen made in some Churches! Prayer Meetings badly attended, no conversions, but still they have said, "Well, it is imperative upon us to keep up a respectable appearance; we must attract the congregation by our singing, by our organ, or some other outward attraction." And angels might have wept as they saw the folly of men who sought after anything except the Lord, who alone can make a house His temple; who alone can make a ministry to be a ministration of mercy; without whose presence the most solemn congregation is but as the herding of men in the market, and the most melodious songs but as the shouting of those who make merry at a marriage. Without the Lord, our solemn days, our new moons, and our appointed feasts are an abomination such as His soul hates! May this Church always feel her utter, entire, absolute dependence upon the presence of her God, and may she never cease humbly to implore Him to forgive her many sins, but still to command His blessing to abide upon her.

III. The time is gone, but I want just to say these two or three words—namely, that, depend upon it, THIS IS TRUE OF A NATION as well as of any one Church and of any one man.

At this particular time, though there is perhaps more Christian effort made in England than has been made for many years, there is also probably as little of the divine blessing resting upon that effort as ever was known. It is a melancholy fact that with all the wonderful increase of accommodations which have been made in London for the worship of God, there is absolutely a greater deficiency now, owing to the increase of the population, a greater deficiency in the means of grace now than there ever was. It is also a notorious fact that of the new Churches which have been erected, you might go into many of them and not find enough to make a respectable gathering in a vestry, so that, even though tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of pounds have been contributed for mere bricks and mortar, in connection with the Episcopalian Establishment, these have merely been a spurious addition to the spiritual supply, but not a real one. It is easy to raise money, but it is not easy to find men; and while it is easy to get an architect to build a Church, none but God Himself can find a minister who will reach the dense masses of our heathendom around us and compel them to come in and worship. The lack of men is the great crying need of the age, and that need is sent to us because we do not pray to God enough to send us men; we do not pray for men, when God does send them, that they may be helped as they should, and consequently much of the Church's effort is thrown away. Beloved, I want to see something done in this London, and how is it to be done? There are thousands of Christians, tens of thousands of Christians in London, and yet the cause does not spread, or very slowly! What is the cause? Jonah shook Nineveh from end to end, and yet a hundred thousand followers of Jesus cannot do it. Paul, marching along the Apian way at Rome, marked an era in Rome's history; and yet there

are many ministers of Christ who thread our streets, and yet what are we all put together for real power? We do not seem to amount in this great city, all of us, to anything more than a mere chip in the porridge; we scarcely affect the population at all. Oh, it is strange, it is passing strange; for it is the gospel which we preach, we know it is the gospel, and some of us do try to preach it with all our might. But if God withholds His face, what can be done? Yet, brothers and sisters, this can be done—we will cry to the Lord until He reveals His face again. We will give Him no rest till He establishes and makes His Church a praise in the earth. O Christian men and women, if you could realize the situation! A city of three millions, not wholly given to idolatry, but still very much given to sin, and we ourselves so weak in the midst of it! If we could but realize this position, and then take hold upon the omnipotent arm, and by an overcoming faith, such as only God could give to any one of us, believe it possible for the Lord Jesus to save this city, and then go forward boldly expecting Him to do it, we might see more than we have ever seen!

And now, what if I prophesy that we *shall* see it! What if I say that if God will but stir up His people everywhere for prayer, He will do a work in our day that shall make both the ears of him that hears it to tingle, not with horror, but with joy! He will yet let the world know that there is a God in Israel. Verily, that which hinders is our lack of faith, for if the Son of man should descend among us, would He find faith on the earth? O unbelieving Church, O thankless generation, you are not straitened in God—you are straitened in your own hearts; and if you could but believe Him, and so prove Him by your faith, He would yet open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, such that you should not have room enough to receive.

This, then, is the matter, and we leave it with you. We are utterly dependent upon God—absolutely must we rest on Him. But this is as it should be, for it would be better to trust in the Lord than to have confidence in man: better to trust in the Lord than to have confidence in princes. Through the blood of Jesus let us rest in divine love, and give the Lord no rest till He makes bare His arm in the midst of this land!

May the Lord give His blessing to our words, for Jesus' sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOB 34.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

GRIEVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT
NO. 738

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 3, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption."
Ephesians 4:30.

IT is a very clear proof of the personality of the Holy Spirit that He can be grieved. Now, it would be very difficult to imagine an influence, or a mere spiritual emanation being grieved. We can only grieve a person, and, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit may be grieved, we see that He is a distinct subsistence in the sacred Trinity. Rob Him not of the glory which is due to Him, but is ever mindful to do Him homage. Our text, moreover, reveals to us the close connection between the Holy Spirit and the believer; He must take a very tender and affectionate interest in us since He is grieved by our shortcomings and our sins. He is not a God who reigns in solitary isolation, divided by a great gulf, but He, the blessed Spirit, comes into such near contact with us, takes such minute observations, feels such tender regards, that He can be grieved by our faults and follies. Although the word "grieve" is a painful one, yet there is honey in the rock; for it is an inexpressibly delightful thought that He who rules heaven and earth, and is the Creator of all things, and the infinite and ever blessed God, condescends to enter into such infinite relationships with His people that His divine mind may be affected by their actions. What a marvel that Deity should be said to grieve over the faults of beings so utterly insignificant as we are! We may not understand the expression literally, as though the sacred Spirit could be affected with sorrow like to human sorrow, but we must not forego the consolatory assurance that He takes the same deep interest in us as a fond parent takes in a beloved but wayward child; and is not this a marvel? Let those who cannot feel be unmoved. As for me, I shall not cease to wonder and adore!

I. The first point which we will consider this morning is THE ASTOUNDING FACT *that the Holy Spirit may be grieved.* That loving, tender Spirit who, of His own accord, has taken upon Himself to quicken us from our death in sin, and to be the educator of the new life which He has implanted within us; that divine instructor, illuminator, comforter, remembrancer whom Jesus has sent forth to be our abiding guide and teacher, may be grieved! He whose divine energy is life to our souls, dew to our graces, light to our understandings, and comfort to our hearts, may be vexed by us. The heavenly dove may be disturbed; the celestial fire may be dampened; the divine wind may be resisted; the blessed Paraclete may be treated with despite.

The loving grief of the Holy Spirit may be traced to *His holy character and perfect attributes.* It is the nature of a holy being to be vexed with unholiness. There can be no concord between God and Belial. A Spirit immaculately pure cannot but take umbrage at uncleanness, and especially must He be grieved by the presence of evil in the objects of His affections. Sin everywhere must be displeasing to the Spirit of holiness, but sin in His own people is grievous to Him in the highest degree. He will not hate His people, but He does hate their sins, and hates them all the more because they nestle in His children's bosoms. The Spirit would not be the Spirit of truth if He could approve of that which is false in us—He would not be pure if that which is impure in us did not grieve Him. We could not believe Him to be Holy if He could look with complacency upon our unholiness; nor should we think of Him as being perfect if our imperfection could be regarded by Him without displeasure. No, because He is what He is, the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of holiness, therefore everything in us which falls short of His own nature must be grievous to Him—He helps our infirmities, but He grieves over our sins.

He is grieved with us mainly *for our own sakes,* for He knows what misery sin will cost us; He reads our sorrows in our sins. "Ah, silly sheep," He seems to say, "I know the dark mountain upon which you will stumble; I see the thorns which will cut you, and the wounds which will pierce you! I know, O wayward child, the rod which you are making for your own back by your follies! I know, poor erring one, into what a sea of trouble you will plunge yourself by that headstrong will, that quick temper that love of self, that ardent pursuit of gain." He grieves over us because He sees how much chastisement we incur, and how much communion we lose. When we might have been upon the mountain of fellowship, we are sighing in the dungeon of despondency; and all because, from motives of fleshy ease, we preferred to go down By-Path Meadow, and forsake the right way because it was rough. The Spirit is grieved that we should thus bring ourselves into the darkness of a loathsome dungeon, and subject ourselves to the blows of the crab-tree club of giant Despair. He foresees how bitterly we shall rue the day in which we parted company with Jesus, and so pierced ourselves through with many sorrows. He foresees that the backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, and grieves because He foresees the backslider's grief. A mother's grief for the wrong-doing of her prodigal son is not so much the pain which he has directly occasioned her, as the sorrow which she knows that he will bring upon himself. David did not so much lament his own loss of his child, as Absalom's death, with all its dread results, to Absalom himself. "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!" Here is deep sorrow; but the next sentence shows that it was by no means selfish, for he is willing to take a greater grief upon himself—"Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Such is the holy grief of the Spirit of God for those in whom He dwells—it is for their sakes that He is troubled.

Moreover, it is doubtless *for Jesus Christ's sake* that the Spirit is grieved. We are the purchase of Jesus' death upon the tree—He has

bought us dearly, and He should have us altogether for Himself; and when He does not have us completely as His own, you can well conceive that the Spirit of God is grieved. We ought to glorify Christ in these mortal bodies; it should be the one end and objective of our desire to crown that head with gems which once was crowned with thorns—it is lamentable that we should so frequently fail in this reasonable service. Jesus deserves our best—every wound of His claims us, and every pang He bore, and every groan that escaped His lips, is a fresh reason for perfect holiness and complete devotion to His cause; and, because the Holy Spirit sees us so traitorous to the love of Christ, so false to that redeeming blood, so forgetful of our solemn obligations, He grieves over us because we dishonor our Lord.

Would I be wrong if I say that He grieves over us *for the Church's sake?* How might some of you be useful if you did but live up to your privileges! Ah, my brothers, how the Comforter must surely grieve over those of us who are ministers, when He sets us as watchmen, and we do not watch, and the Church is invaded; when He commissions us as sowers of the good seed, and our hands are only half filled, or we scatter cockle and darnel instead of sowing the good wheat! How must He grieve over us because we have not that tenderness of heart, that melting of love, that vehemence of zeal, that earnestness of soul which we ought to exhibit! When the Church of God suffers damage through us—the Spirit loves the Church and cannot endure to see her robbed and despoiled, her children left to wander, her wounded sons unsuccored, and her broken hearts unhealed—because we are indifferent to our work, and careless in our labor for the Church, the Holy Spirit is much displeased. But it is not only with ministers, but with all of you, for there is a niche that each of you should fill; and if that is vacant the Church loses by you, the kingdom of Christ suffers damage, the revenue which ought to come into Zion is cut short, and the Holy Spirit is grieved. Your lack of prayer, your lack of love, your deficiency in generosity—all these may be sad injuries to the Church of God, and therefore is the loving Spirit of God much disquieted.

Remember once more, that the Spirit of God mourns over the shortcomings of Christians, *for sinners' sakes;* for it is the Spirit's office to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; but the course of many believers is directly counter to this work of the Spirit. Their lives do not convict the world of sin, but rather tend to comfort transgressors in their iniquity. We have heard the actions of professors quoted by worldlings as an excuse for their sins. Openly profane persons have said, "Look at those Christians! They do such-and-such, why may not we?" It is ill when Jerusalem comforts Sodom, and when the crimes of the heathens find precedents in the sins of Israel. It is the Spirit's work to convict the world of righteousness; but many a professor convicts the world of the opposite. "No," says the world, "there is no more righteousness to be had in Christ than anywhere else, for, look at those who follow Him, or pretend to do so, where is their righteousness? It does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees." The Spirit of truth convicts the world

of judgment to come, but how few of us help Him in that great work! We live and act and talk as if there were no judgment to come; toiling for wealth as if this world were all careless of souls, as though hell were a dream. Unmoved by eternal realities, unstirred by the terrors of the Lord, indifferent to the ruin of mankind, many professors live like worldlings and are as unchristian as infidels! This is an indisputable fact, but one to be lamented with tears of blood.

Brothers and sisters, I dare not think how much of the ruin of the world must be laid at the door of the Church, but I will dare to say this, that although the divine purposes will be fulfilled, and God will not miss the number of His elect, yet the fact that this London of ours is now rather a heathen than a Christian city, can be laid at no one's door but that of the professing Church of God and her ministers. Where else can it lie? Is the city wrapped in darkness? It need not have been so. If we had been faithful it would not have been so—if we are faithful in the future it shall not long remain so. I cannot imagine an apostolic Church, set down in the midst of London, and filled with the ardor of the first disciples, remaining long without influencing sensibly upon the masses. I know the increase of our population is immense—I know that we are adding every year a fresh town to this overgrown city; but I will not—I dare not—tolerate the idea that the zeal of God's Church, if at its right pitch, is too feeble to meet the case. No, there is wealth enough among us, if it were consecrated, to build as many houses of prayer as shall be needed. There is ability enough among us, if it were but given to the ministry of the Word, to yield a sufficiency of preachers of the cross. We have all the pecuniary and mental strength that is needed. The point in which we fail is this—we are straitened in spiritual power, poverty-stricken in divine grace, lukewarm in zeal, meager in devotedness, staggering in faith. We are not straitened in our God; we are straitened in our own hearts. Brothers and sisters, I believe the Spirit of God is very greatly grieved with many Churches for the sake of the sinners in their congregations who are scarcely cared for, seldom prayed for, and never wept for. Would that the thought of this might move us and our brethren to mend our ways!

II. Secondly, let us refer to DEPLORABLE CAUSES *which produce the grief of the Holy Spirit.*

The context is some assistance to us. We learn that *sins of the flesh, filthiness, and evil speaking* of every sort, are grievous to Him. Note the preceding verse: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." Let a Christian fall into the habit of talking in a loose, unchaste style, let him delight in things that are improper, even if he shall not plunge into the commission of outward uncleanness, and the Spirit of God will not be pleased with him. The Holy Spirit descended upon our Lord as a dove; and a dove delights in the pure rivers of water, and shuns all kinds of filthiness. In Noah's day, the dove found no place for the sole of its feet on all the carcasses floating in the waste; and even so the heavenly dove finds no repose in the dead and corrupt things of the flesh. If we live in the Spirit, we shall not obey the desires of the flesh;

they who walk after the flesh know nothing of the Spirit. It appears, from the 31st verse, that the Holy Spirit is grieved by any approach to *bitterness*, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking and malice. If in a Christian Church there shall be dissensions and divisions; if brother shall speak evil of brother, and sister of sister, love is absent, and the Spirit of love will not long be present. The dove is the emblem of peace. One of the early fruits of the Spirit is peace. My dear friends, I hope as a Church, if there are any secret ill feelings among us, any hidden roots of bitterness, even though they may not yet have sprung up to trouble us, they may be removed and destroyed at once. I do not know of any such abominable things, and am happy to be able to say so; I trust we walk together in holy unity and concord of heart; and if any of you are conscious of bitterness in ever so small a measure, purge it out lest the Spirit of God be grieved with you, and grieved with the Church of God for your sake.

I have no doubt it greatly grieves the Spirit to see in believers any degree of *love of the world.* His holy jealousy is excited by such unholy love. If a mother should see her child fonder of someone else than of her; if she should know that it was more happy in the company of a stranger than when in the bosom of its own parent, she would feel it a very hard trial to bear. Now the Spirit of God gives to believers celestial joys and abounding comforts; and if He sees us turn our back upon all these, to go into worldly company, to feed greedily upon the same empty joys which satisfy worldlings, He is a jealous God, and He takes it as a great slight put upon Himself. What? Does the good Shepherd load the table with heaven's own dainties, and do we prefer to devour the husks which the swine eat? When I think of a Christian trying to find his enjoyment where the lowest of worldlings find theirs, I can scarcely imagine him to be a Christian, or, if he is, he must very greatly grieve the Spirit of God! Why, you set the world, which you profess to have found empty, and vain, and deceitful—you set that before the choice things of the kingdom of grace; and while you profess to be, "raised up to sit together with Christ in heavenly places," you still grovel in the dust as others do. What does the world say? "Ah, ah," they say, "Here is one of those Christian people coming after a little happiness! Poor soul! His religion gives him no joy, and, therefore, he is looking for a little elsewhere. Make room for him, poor fellow, he has a hard time of it on Sundays." Then the notion goes abroad that Christians have no joy in Christ; that we have to deny ourselves all true happiness, and only get a little delight by stealth, when we do as others do. What a libel is this! And yet how many professors are responsible for it! If we live in communion with Jesus, we shall not hanker after the world; we shall despise its mirth and trample on its treasures. Worldliness, in any shape, must be very grievous to the Spirit of God; not only the love of pleasure, but the love of gain. Worldliness in Christian men and women in imitating the world in dress—worldliness in luxury, or in conversation, must displease the Spirit of God, because He calls us a peculiar people, and He tells us to, "come out from among them and be separated, and touch not the unclean thing." And then He promises, "I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and

daughters." But if we will not be separate, how can we expect Him to be otherwise than grieved!

Israel was compelled to quit Egypt for the wilderness, and God said, "I remember you, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." He seems to dote upon Israel's early separation to Himself; and so I believe the Lord delights to see His people severing fond connections, giving up carnal pleasures, and going outside the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ. It ravishes the heart of Jesus to see His Church forsake the world. Here are His own words to His bride, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house; so shall the king greatly desire your beauty." He loves to have His saints entirely to Himself. He is a jealous Savior, and hence Paul says, he labored that he might, "present the Church as a chaste virgin unto Christ." Jesus wants to have our chastity to Him maintained beyond suspicion, that we may choose Him as our sole possession, and leave the base things of the earth to those who love them. Beware, my brothers and sisters, of grieving the Holy Spirit by worldliness. Moreover, the Spirit of God is greatly grieved by *unbelief*. What would grieve you more, dear friend, than to have your child suspect your truthfulness? "Alas," cries the father, "Can it have come to this, that my own child will not believe me? Is my promise to be thrown in my teeth, and am I to be told by my own son, 'My father, I cannot trust you'?" It is not come to that with any of us, as parents, yet, and shall it be so with our God? Alas, it has been! We have done despite to the Spirit of truth by doubting the promise and mistrusting the faithfulness of God. Of all sins, surely this must be one of the most provoking. If there is the virus of diabolical guilt in anything, it must be in the unbelief, not of sinners, but of God's own people; for sinners have never seen what saints have seen—never felt what we have felt, never known what we have known; and, therefore, if they should doubt, they do not sin against such light of God, nor do despite to such invincible arguments for confidence as we do. God forgive our unbelief, and may we never grieve His Spirit anymore.

Further, the Spirit is doubtless grieved by our *ingratitude*. When Jesus reveals His love to us, if we go away from the chamber of fellowship, to talk lightly, and forget that love; or if, when we have been raised up from a sickbed, we are no more consecrated than before; or if, when our bread is given us, and our water is sure, our heart never thanks the bounteous giver; or if, when preserved under temptation, we fail to magnify the Lord; surely this, in each case, must be a God-provoking sin.

If we add pride to ingratitude we sorely grieve the blessed Spirit. When a saved sinner grows proud, he insults the wisdom of the Spirit of God by his folly, for what can there be in us to be proud of? Pride is a weed which will grow in *any* soil. Proud of the mercies of God! As well be proud of being in debt! Why, some of us are so foolish that God cannot exalt us, for if He did we would straightway grow dizzy, and would be sure to fall. If the Lord were to put so much as one gold piece of comfort into our pockets, we would think ourselves so rich that we would set up in business on our own account, and cease from dependence upon Him. He

cannot indulge us with a little joy—He has to keep us as the father in the parable did the elder brother, who complained, "You never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." Oh, it is sad that we should be so foolish as to become proud of our graces! This is a great grief to the Spirit in a private person, and even more so when it becomes the fault of an entire Church. If you as a Church shall boast that you are numerous, or generous, or rich, it will be all over with you. God will abase those who exalt themselves. If your soul can make her boast in the Lord, you may boast as much as you will; but if you glory in anything else, God will hide His face, and you will be troubled, though your mountain once stood so firm that you dreamed it could never be moved.

I cannot give you a full list of all the evils which grieve the Spirit of God, but let me mention here, particularly, one—*a lack of prayer.* This is grievous, either in the Church or in an individual. Does not this touch some of you? How little do some of us pray! Let each conscience now be its own accuser. My dear brothers and sisters, how about the mercy seat? How about the closet and secret communion with God? How about wrestling for your children? How about pleading for the pastor? Have you not been backward in interceding for the conversion of your neighbor? Could you read the story of Abraham's interceding for Sodom, and say that you have interceded for London like that? Can you read of Jacob at the brook Jabbok, and say that you ever spent an hour, much less a night, in wrestling with the Lord? The prayerlessness of this age is one of its worst signs, and the prayerlessness of some of our Christian Churches, looks as if God were about to withdraw Himself from the land; for in many Churches, as I am told, they have a difficulty in getting enough men to attend the prayer meetings to carry them on. I know of some—"Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon!"—I know of some Churches that have given up prayer meetings because nobody comes. Ah, if this case were a solitary one, it ought to be daily mourned over, but there are scores of Churches in the same condition; the Lord have mercy upon them, and upon the land in which such Churches dwell.

To sum up many things which might be said, I think the Holy Spirit will be grieved with any one of us if we shall indulge *any known sin,* let it be what it may; and I will add to that, if any one of us shall neglect any known *duty*, let it be what it may. I cannot imagine the Spirit of God being pleased with a brother who knows his Master's will, and does it not; I know the Word says that he shall be beaten with many stripes. Surely, beating with stripes must be the result of grief on the part of the hand that administers such stripes. Let any person or any Church know good and do it not, and to him or to it, it shall be sin; and that which might not be sin in the ignorant, will become sin to those blessed with the light of God. As soon as your conscience is enlightened, and you know the path of duty, you need not say, "Others ought to do it," (so they should, but to their own Master they must stand or fall). If your judgment is enlightened, make haste and delay not to keep the commandments of God. John Owen, in his treatise upon the Holy Spirit, makes a remark that he

believes the Spirit of God was greatly grieved in England by the public affirmation in the articles of the doctrine that the Church of God has power to decree rites and ceremonies for herself. God's Word is the only rule of God's Church. Inasmuch as the Church of England, so called, claims to be her own lawmaker, she has grieved the Spirit. When a Church claims to itself the right to judge what are to be its own ordinances instead of willingly and obediently acknowledging that she has no right of choice whatever, but is bound to obey the revealed will of her Great Head, she sins terribly. It is the duty of all Christians to search the Word as to what are the ordinances which God has fixed and commanded, and being once clear as to the rule of the Word, it is ours to obey it; if you see infant baptism in the Word, do not neglect it; if it is not there, do not regard it. Here I must give utterance to a thought which has long followed me. Perhaps the present sad condition of the Christian Church, and the prevalence of the dogma of "baptismal regeneration," may be traceable to the neglect that reigns in the Church almost universally with regard to the great Christian ordinance of believers' baptism. Men laugh at all talk about this, as if the question were of no importance; but I take leave to say that whatever may be the truth of God upon that ordinance, it is worth every believer's while to find it out. I meet constantly with people who have no sort of faith in infant baptism, and have long ago given it up; and yet, though they admit that they ought to be baptized as believers, they neglect the duty as unimportant. Now mark, when the Last Great Day shall reveal all things, I am persuaded it will reveal this—that the Church's supplanting the baptism of believers by that of infants was not only a great means in the original establishment of Popery, but that the maintenance of the perverted ordinance in our Protestant Church, is the chief root and cause of the present revival of Popery in this land!

If we would lay the axe to the roots of sacramentarianism, we must go back to the old Scriptural method of giving ordinances to believers only—the ordinances *after* faith, not *before* faith. We must give up baptizing in order to regenerate and administer it to those alone who profess to be already regenerate. When we all come to this, we shall hear no more of "baptismal regeneration," and a thousand other false doctrines will vanish away. Lay down the rule that unbelievers have no right to Church ordinances, and you put it out of the power of men to establish the unhallowed institution of a State Church; for, mark you, no National Church is possible on the principle of believers' baptism—a principle much too exclusive to suit the mixed multitude of a whole nation! A State Church *must* hold to infant baptism; necessarily it must receive all the members of the State into its number—it *must,* or else it cannot expect the pay of the State. Make the Church a body consisting only of professedly faithful men and women, believers in the Lord Jesus, and let the Church say to all others, "You have no part nor lot in this matter until you are converted," and there is the end of the unholy alliance between the Church and the world which is now a withering blight upon our land. Errors of doctrine, practice, and polity may cause the dew of heaven to be withheld. You will say, "Such errors did not hinder revivals in other days." Perhaps

not, but God does not always wink at our ignorance. In these days no one needs to be ignorant about the mystery of "baptismal regeneration," the error has worked itself to its full development, and reached such a climax that every Christian ought to give it his most earnest consideration. Guilt will come upon us if we are not earnest in seeking out the roots of an evil which is the cause of such deadly mischief in the land. If, as a Church, we are clear in our testimony on this point, I entreat you to see if there is any other error with which you may be charged. Is there a part of Scripture which we have not attended to? Is there a truth of God which we have neglected? Let us hold ourselves ready to relinquish our most cherished opinions at the commands of Scripture, whatever they may be. I say to you what I say to others, if the form of our Church government, if the manner of our administration of Christian ordinances, if the doctrines we hold are unwarranted by the Word of God, let us be faithful to our consciences and to the Word, and be ready to alter, according to our light. Let us give up the idea of stereotyping anything; let us be ready at any moment and every moment to do just what the Spirit of God would have us do; for if not, we may not expect the Spirit of God to abide with us. O for a heart to serve God perfectly! O that such a heart would be given to all His people, so that they were ready to renounce authority, antiquity, taste, and opinion, and bow before the Holy Spirit alone! May the Church yet come to walk by the simple rule of God's Book, and by the light of God's Spirit, and then shall we cease to grieve the Holy Spirit.

III. Thirdly, and very briefly—much too briefly—THE LAMENTABLE RESULT *of the Spirit's being grieved.*

In the child of God it will not lead to his utter destruction, for no heir of heaven can perish; neither will the Holy Spirit be utterly taken away from him, for the Spirit of God is given to abide with us forever. But the ill-effects are nevertheless most terrible. You will lose, my dear friends, *all sense of the Holy Spirit's presence*—He will be as one hidden from you—no beams of comfort, no words of peace, no thoughts of love. There will be what Cowper calls, "an aching void which the world can never fill." Grieve the Holy Spirit, and you will lose all *Christian joy;* the light of God shall be taken from you, and you shall stumble in darkness; those very means of divine grace which once were such a delight, shall have no music in your ears. Your soul shall be no longer as a watered garden, but as a howling wilderness. Grieve the Spirit of God, and you will lose all *power;* if you pray, it will be a very weak prayer—you will not prevail with God. When you read the Scriptures you shall not be able to lift the latch and force your way into the inner mysteries of the truth of God. When you go up to the house of God, there shall be none of that devout exhilaration, that running without weariness, that walking without fainting. You shall feel yourself like Samson when his hair was lost—weak, captive, and blind. Let the Holy Spirit depart, and *assurance* is gone, doubts follow, questions and suspicions are aroused—

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

Grieve the Spirit of God, and *usefulness* will cease; the ministry will yield no fruit; your Sunday school work will be barren; your speaking to others and laboring for others souls will be like sowing the wind.

Let a *Church* grieve the Spirit of God, and oh, the blights that shall come and wither her fair garden! Then her days of solemn assembly will have no acceptance with heaven; her sons, although all of them ordained as priests unto God, will have no acceptable incense to offer. Let the Church grieve the Spirit, and she shall fail to bless the age in which she lives; she shall cast no light of God into the surrounding darkness; no sinners will be saved by her means; there shall be few additions to her number; her missionaries will cease to go forth; there shall be no marriage feasts of communion in her house; darkness and death will reign where all was joy and life. Brothers and sisters, beloved in the Lord, may the Lord prevent us from grieving His Spirit as a Church, but may we be earnest, zealous, truthful, united, and holy, so that we may retain among us this heavenly guest who will leave us if we grieve Him.

IV. Lastly, there is one PERSONAL ARGUMENT which is used in the text to forbid our grieving the Spirit— "Whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption."

What does this mean? There are many meanings assigned by different commentators—we shall be content with the following—A seal is set upon a thing to *attest its authenticity and authority.* By what can I know that I am truly what I profess to be? I am by profession a Christian. How do I know whether I am really a Christian or not? God sets a seal on every genuine believer—what is it? It is the possession of the Holy Spirit. If you have the Holy Spirit, my dear friend, that is God's seal set upon you that you are His child. Do you not see, then, that if you grieve the Spirit, you lose your seal, and you are like a commission with the seal torn away—you are like a note of hand without a signature. Your evidence of being God's child is the Spirit; for if "any man have not the Spirit of Christ, He is none of His." If you have not the Spirit in you, that will be decisive evidence for you that you do not belong to Christ; for you lack the groundwork of true assurance, which is the indwelling presence, power, and your enjoyment of the Spirit.

Moreover, I have said a seal is used for *attestation;* and so it is, not only to you, but to others. You say to the world around, "I am a child of God." How are they to know it? They can only judge as you must judge yourself, by looking for the seal. If you possess the Spirit of God, they will soon see you to be a Christian; if you have it not, whatever else you have, you will soon be discovered to be a forgery, for you lack the seal. Beloved, all Church history proves this, that when the Christian Church has been filled with the Spirit of God, the world has confessed her pedigree, because it could not help doing so; but when the Church has lost her enthusiasm and fervor because she has lost the heavenly fire, then the world has asked, "What is this Christian Church more than the synagogue of the Jews, or the company of Mohammed?" The world knows God's seal; and if it does not see it, it soon despises that society which pretends to be the Church of God, but has not the mark and proof of it.

The same truth holds good in all cases; for instance, in the matter of the Christian ministry. When I first came to minister in London, there was some little talk about my being ordained. "If I am ordained of God, I do not need human ordination; and if, on the other band, God has not called me to the work, no man or set of men can do it." But it was said, "You must have a recognition service, that others may signify their approval!" "No," I said, "if God is with me, they will recognize me quickly enough as a man of God; and if the Lord's presence is denied me, human approval is of little worth." Brothers, if you profess to be called to any form of ministry, your only way of proving your call will be by showing the seal of the Spirit; when that seal is affixed to your labors, you will require no other recognition. The camp of Dan soon recognized Samson when the Spirit came upon him; and when he went among his enemies—the Philistines—with the jaw-bone of an ass, they soon recognized him as they saw him piling the slain heaps upon heaps. This is how the minister or Christian must compel the recognition of his status and call. Knights of the cross must win their spurs upon the battlefield! The only way for a Christian to be discerned to be a Christian, or for a Church to be manifested as a Church of God, is by having the Spirit of God, and in the name of the Spirit of God doing exploits for God, and bringing glory to His holy name.

Once more, a seal is used for *preserving*, as well as for attesting. The Easterner seals up his moneybags to secure the gold within, and we seal our letters to guard the enclosure. A seal is set for security. Now, beloved, as the only way by which you can be known to be a Christian is by really possessing the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, so, also, the only way by which you can be kept a Christian, and preserved from going back to the world, is by still possessing that same Holy Spirit. What are you if the Spirit of God is gone? Salt that has lost its savor. With what can you be salted? "Trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots...wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." The Holy Spirit is not to you a luxury, but a necessity—you must have Him, or you die; you must have Him, or you are damned, yes, and with a double damnation. Here comes in this choice promise that the Lord will not leave you, and will not forsake you; but if He did leave you forever, there would remain no more sacrifice for sin; it would be impossible to renew you again unto repentance, seeing that you would have crucified the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame. Grieve not, then, that Spirit upon whom you are so dependent—He is your credentials as a Christian; He is your life as a believer. Prize Him beyond all price; speak of Him with bowed head, with reverent awe; rest upon Him with childlike, loving confidence; obey His faintest monitions; neglect not His inward whispers; turn not aside from His teachings in the Word, or by His ministers; and be as ready to feel His power as the waves of the sea are to be moved by the wind, or a feather to be wafted by the gale. Hold yourselves ready to do His bidding. As the eyes of the handmaiden are to her mistress, so let your eyes be on Him. When you know His will, ask no questions, count no costs, dare all hazards, defy all circumstanc-

es. Let the will of the Spirit be your absolute law, apart from gain or loss, apart from your own judgment or your own taste. Let the will of the Spirit, when once plainly perceived by you, be instantly obeyed, and try to perceive that will. Do not willfully shut your eyes to an unpleasant duty, or close your understanding to an unwelcome truth. Lean not to your own understanding; consider that the Holy Spirit alone can teach you, and that those who will not be taught of Him must remain hopelessly foolish.

Oh, if I might but live to see the Church of God recognize the power of the Holy Spirit; if I could but see her cast aside the grave clothes which she has so long persisted in wearing; if I could see her put no confidence in State or power—rely no longer upon eloquence and learning; if I could see her depend upon the Holy Spirit, even though her ministers should again be fishermen, and her followers should again be the "base things of this world, and the things that are not," even though she should have to be baptized in blood; even though the man-child should excite the dragon's wrath and he should pour floods out against her, yet the day of her final victory would have dawned. If she did but obey the Spirit—if her directories, creeds, rules, prayer books, rubrics, and canons, were cast to the winds, and the free Spirit of the living God ruled everywhere; if, instead of the decrees of her councils and the slavish bondage of priestcraft and ritual, she would only embrace the liberty with which Christ has made her free, and walk according to His Word and the teachings of her heavenly Teacher—then might we hear the shout of the King in our midst, and the battlements of error would fall! God send it, and send it in our time, and His shall be praise!

I fear there are some here who do not *grieve* the Spirit, but do worse than that; they *quench* the Spirit—they *resist* the Spirit. May the Lord grant them forgiveness of this great sin, and may they be led to the cross of Christ to find pardon for every sin! At the cross, and there alone, can everlasting life be found. God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
EPH 4:17-32; 5:1-7.

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST!

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of
C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English,
and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit:
www.spurgeongems.org

THE SIN OFFERING
NO. 739

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 10, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he has sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the Lord for a sin offering."
Leviticus 4:3.

IN the previous chapters of the book of Leviticus you read of the burnt offering, the peace offering, and the meat offering—all types our Lord Jesus Christ, as seen from different points of view. Those three sacrifices were sweet savor offerings, and represent the Lord Jesus in His glorious person and perfect righteousness as an offering of a sweet smell unto God. The chapter before us, the whole of which we shall require as a text, describes the sin offering, which, although quite distinct from the sweet savor offerings, is not altogether to be separated from them, for the Lord Jesus Christ viewed in any light is very dear unto His Father; and even when beheld as a sin offering is elect and precious unto God, as we shall have to show you in the type before us still, the sin offering does not set forth the acceptance of the substitute before the Lord, but rather brings out the abhorrence which God has towards sin, the putting away from His holy presence of everything upon which sin is laid. This morning, if God shall enable us, we hope to impress upon your minds, first of all, the great evil of sin; and secondly, the great and wonderful power of the blood of atonement by which sin is put away.

Without any further preface we shall invite you, in meditating upon the type before us, first, *to consider our Lord Jesus as made sin for us;* secondly, we shall *ask you to observe, carefully and prayerfully, His blood in its efficacy before the Lord;* and thirdly, *we shall bid you look at His substitution in the shame which it involved.*

I. First, brothers and sisters, let us, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, view our BLESSED LORD AS MADE SIN FOR US, as He is here typified in the bullock.

His personal character is set forth before us in the victim chosen, namely, a young bullock without blemish. It was a bullock, the most valuable of the sacrifices, an animal laborious in life and costly in death; it was a young bullock in the fullness of its strength and vigor; it was without blemish—and the slightest fault disqualified it from being laid upon the altar of God. Behold, O believer, your Lord Jesus, more precious by far than ten thousands of the fat of fed beasts—a sacrifice not to be purchased with gold, or estimated in silver. Full of vigor, in the very prime of manhood, He offered up Himself for us! Even when He died, He died not through weakness; for that cry of His at His death, "with a loud voice," proved that His life was still firm within Him, and that when He gave up

the ghost, His death was not one of compulsion, but a voluntary expiring of the soul. His glory is as the firstling of the bullock, full of vigor and of strength. How distinctly was our Lord proved to be without blemish! Naturally born without sin, practically He lived without fault. In Him there was neither deficiency nor excess. In no virtue did He come behind, and no fault could be found in Him. The prying eyes of the prince of this world could find nothing in Him, and the still more accurate search of the all-seeing God found no fault in Him. This spotlessness was necessary, for how could He have been made an offering for our sin, if it had not been true that personally, "He knew no sin"? Shall one bankrupt stand in the debtor's court as a substitute for another? How shall one penniless wretch pay the debt of another who is about to be cast into prison? If the king requires service of any man, how shall another from whom service is equally due, offer himself as a substitute for him? No, the Savior of others must have no obligations of His own; He must owe no personal debts; there must be no claims on the part of justice against Him, on His own account, or He cannot stand "the Just for the unjust," to expiate the sins of men. You holy souls, feast your eyes upon the spotless Son of God. You pure in heart, delight your purified vision with a sight of His perfections. You shall one day be like He—this will be your heaven; meanwhile, make it your rapture, your paradise on earth, to gaze upon the unrivaled beauties of the Altogether lovely. "In Him was no sin." In Him was all excellence. His body and soul are alike—white as the lily for holiness, though made by suffering red as the rose. Alabaster, and bright ivory overlaid with sapphires are but dull and soiled types of His purity. Come, you virgin souls, and let the eyes of your holy love survey Him, that you may see how fit He was to suffer as "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

The act of transference of sin to the victim next calls for our attention. You will have noticed, in reading the chapter, that our Lord's being made sin is set forth to us by the very significant transfer of sin to the bullock, which was made by the priest, or by the elders of the people, as the case might be. We are expressly told, "He shall lay his hands upon the bullock's head," which act, our good Dr. Watts has interpreted in his well-known verse—

"My faith would lay her hands
On that dear head of Thine,
While like a penitent I stand;
And there confess my sin."

This laying of the hand does not appear to have been a mere touch of contact, but in some other places of Scripture has the meaning of leaning heavily, as in the expression, "Your wrath lies hard upon me" (Psa 88:7).

Surely this is the very essence and nature of faith, which does not only bring us into contact with the Great substitute, but teaches us to lean upon Him with all the burden of our guilt; so that if our sins are very weighty, yet we see Him as able to bear them all; and mark, the whole weight of our iniquity taken off from us, who must would been crushed to the lowest hell thereby, and laid on Him who took the weight and bore it all, and then buried it in His sepulcher forever. From of old it was decreed, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Jehovah made to

meet upon the head of the substitute all the offenses of His covenant people; but each one of the chosen is brought personally to ratify this solemn covenant act of the great God, when by grace he is enabled by faith to put his hands upon the head of the "Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world." My fellow believers, do you remember that rapturous day? My soul recalls her day of deliverance with delight; laden with guilt and full of fears, I saw my Savior willing to be my Substitute, and I laid my hand, oh, how timidly at first, but as my courage grew and confidence was confirmed, I leaned my soul entirely upon Him; and now it is my unceasing joy to know that my sins are no longer imputed to me, but laid on Him, and like the debts of the poor wounded traveler, Jesus, like the Good Samaritan, has said of all my future sinfulness, "Set that to My account." Oh, blessed discovery, sweet solace of a repenting heart!—

"My numerous sins transferred to Him,
Shall never more be found,
Lost in His blood's atoning stream
Where every crime is drowned!"

We must now beg your notice of the *sins transferred.* In the case of the type, they were sins of ignorance. Alas, the Jew knew nothing about a sin offering for sins of presumption, but there is such a sin offering for us. Our presumptuous sins were laid on Christ; our willful sins; our sins of light and knowledge, are pardoned by His blood. The mention of sins of ignorance, suggests a very comfortable reflection, that if there are any sins which I know not, they were, notwithstanding my ignorance, laid on my substitute and put away by His atonement. It is not sin as we see it which was laid on Christ, but sin as God sees it; not sin as our conscience feebly reveals it to us, but sin as God beholds it, in all its unmitigated malignity, and unconcealed loathsomeness. Sin in its exceeding sinfulness Jesus has put away. Not sham sin, but real sin; sin as before the Lord; sin as sin, Jesus has made an end of. Child of God, you will not misuse this truth of God and deny the need of repentance, for you well know that you cannot practically feel the power of this blood, except as your sin is known to you; this, indeed, is intimated in the type, for, according to verse fourteen, the bullock was only offered when the sin was known. It was to be laid by the elders upon the head of the bullock, when the sin was no longer hidden from the eyes of the congregation. Sin unknown, the sacrifice is unheeded. It is only as you know and perceive sin that you can consciously know and prize the atonement by which it is taken away. Mark, it is when you perceive sin that then you are to trust the blood; not when you perceive holiness in yourself, and goodness and virtue, but when you perceive sin, and iniquity, and defilement—it is then you are to lay your hand upon the head of the great atoning Sacrifice. Jesus is a *sinner's* Savior. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." It is not written, "If any man is holy, he has an advocate," but, "if any man *sin,* we have an advocate," so that in all our sin and iniquity, blackness, and defilement—when overwhelmed with our own vileness, we may still come to Christ, and believe that our most horrible and detestable sins were laid upon Him, and over and above that, those sins which we do not feel, which may be even more detestable, even these, and what is more, the sinfulness of our nature it-

self—that black and polluted fount from which the streams of our trespasses take their rise; the guilt of all actual and original sin was laid upon Jesus, and by Him forever put away.

Passing on, still keeping to the same point, we would remark that the sin was laid upon the bullock most conspicuously *"before the Lord."* Did you notice the frequent expressions: "shall bring him to the door of the congregation before the Lord;" "kill the bullock before the Lord;" "shall sprinkle the blood seven times before the Lord, and shall put some of it upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord"? Clearly the most important part of the sacrifice was not before the people, but before the Lord. All that the onlookers outside could have seen was the bullock, when dead, carried by the priests outside the camp. Some of them who came nearer might have seen the pouring of the blood at the bottom of the bronze altar, but they certainly never did and never could see the priest sprinkle the blood towards the veil, nor yet see him put it upon the horns of the golden altar, for the court of the priests was concealed from their view. We are very much mistaken if we think that the ceremonies of Jews were much seen by the people. They were mainly unseen except by the priests. The ritual of the old covenant must have been very little a matter of sight; for the Israelite, pure and simple, never penetrated beyond the first court; he stood before the bronze altar, but he never went further; and all that was done in the next court of the priests, and especially all that was done in the most holy place, must have been entirely a matter of faith to all the people. The fact was, the sacrifices were not so much for men to look at as for God Himself to gaze upon, and though this may seem to you a strange observation, there is no little value in it. You will hear men nowadays say that the purpose of atonement has reference to men, and not to God. Depend upon it there is a fatal error in this doctrine, and we must denounce it. Although its advocates take a few expressions from some of our hymns, and pretend to believe that we teach that the blood placated an angry God, we never taught anything of the kind, and they know we never did; yet we are not to be frightened into denying or qualifying our assertion that the action of God towards man has been wondrously affected by the atonement of Christ.

God the Judge would have condemned us to punishment had not Jesus suffered in our place, so that, in justice, we might be permitted to go free. Not only is man made willing to love God by the manifestation of the love of God in Christ Jesus, but it has become possible for God to extend the hand of amity towards sinful man through the atonement; and this would not have been possible, consistently with the divine attributes, if it had not been for the atoning sacrifice. We must still stand to it, that the blood is not merely a comfort to the wounded conscience, but is really a satisfaction to divine Justice; a covering, propitiation, a mercy seat for the Most Holy God. That is a striking passage concerning the Passover and the destroying angel in Egypt. Thus spoke Jehovah, "When *I* see the blood, I will pass over you;" not, "When *you* see the blood." The spared ones did not see the blood at that moment; for, you will remember, they were all inside the house feasting upon the lamb. The father of the family had put the blood outside upon the lintel and the side-posts, not for the

inhabitants to see, but for God to see; and so, though a sight of the precious blood, thanks be to God, does bring us faith, and joy, and peace, yet the real work of our salvation is not the effect of the blood upon us, but the effect of the blood upon God Himself; not, it is true, a change produced in God, but a change which is thus produced in the action of divine justice. Apart from the blood, we are guilty and condemned; washed in the blood, we are accepted and beloved. Without the atonement, we are aliens and strangers, heirs of God's wrath even as others; but, as seen in the eternal covenant purpose, through the precious blood of Jesus, we are accepted in the Beloved. The great stress of the transaction lies in its being done "before the Lord."

Still, further, carefully observe that as soon as ever the sin was thus "before the Lord," laid upon the bullock, *the bullock was slain.* "He shall lay his hands upon the bullock's head, and kill the bullock before the Lord." So, in the 15th verse, "The elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the Lord, and the bullock shall be killed before the Lord." Ah, yes; as soon as the sin is transferred, the penalty is transferred too. Down fell the pole-axe the minute that the priestly hands had been laid on the bullock. Unsheathed was the bloody knife of sacrifice the moment that the elders had begun to lean upon the sacrificial head. So was it with our Savior; He must smart, He must die, for only as dying could He become our sin offering. Ah, beloved, those who would preach Christ, but not Christ crucified, miss the very soul and essence of our holy faith. "Let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him," is the Unitarian cry! Anything but a crucified God! But there, indeed, lies the secret of that mystery, and the very core and kernel of our confidence. A reigning Savior I do rejoice in—the thought of the splendor yet to come makes glad our eyes; but after all, it is a bleeding Savior that is the sinner's hope. It is to the cross, the center of misery, that the sinner turns his eyes for comfort, rather than to the stars of Bethlehem, or to the blazing sun of the millennial kingdom. I remember one joining this Church who said, "Sir, I had faith once in Christ glorified, but it never gave me comfort: I have now come to a faith in Christ crucified, and I have peace." At Calvary there is the comfort, and there only. That Jesus lives is delightful; but the basis of the delight is, "He lives who once was slain." That He will reign forever is a most precious doctrine of our faith, but that the hand that wields the silver scepter, once was pierced, is the great secret of the joy. O beloved, abide not in any place from which your eyes cannot behold the cross of Christ! When you are thinking of the doctrines of the gospel, or the precepts of the Word, or studying the prophecies of Scripture, never let your mind relinquish the study of the cross! The cross was the place of your spiritual birth; it must always be the spot for renewing your health, for it is the sanatorium of every sin-sick soul.

The blood is the true balm of Gilead; it is the only catholicon which heals every spiritual disease. Come, sin-sick soul, and breathe the air which was purified when the blood of the heart of Jesus fell from His wounds to the ground, for no spiritual disease can abide the presence of the healing blood. Hurry, you weak ones, to Calvary, and partake in God-

given strength and vigor. It is from Calvary that you shall see the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing beneath His wings. The beloved Physician meets His patients at the foot of the cross, and relieves them from all their ills.

I shall not ask you to dwell on any further details of the type, as they refer to the substitution, but I cannot leave the topic till I have asked each one this all-important question—"Is the Lord Jesus made a sin offering for you? It is written, *"He* has made Him to be sin for us," and from this it appears that sin was laid upon Jesus by God Himself; but still it is true that each believer by faith lays his own sins there, and the hymn, "I lay my sins on Jesus," is quite Scriptural. Have you, dear friend, seen your sins laid on Jesus? Has your faith laid its hand upon His head? My dear hearers, we shall soon, each one of us, have to pass through the valley of death; it may be but a very short time before some of us will know what are the solemnities of our last, departing hour. Are you ready? Quite ready? You have been a professor of religion for years—are you now ready to die? Can you hope that if at this moment the summons were given, sitting where you are, can you hope you are so really and truly resting in the precious blood, that sin would not disturb your dying peace because it is forgiven and put away? Search the ground of your hope, I pray you, and be not satisfied unless your faith is surely built upon the Rock of Ages. Get as much assurance as you can, my brothers and sisters, but beware of presumption. I have seen some of those fine Christians who will *not* say—

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

And I think very little of them. It is their boast that no hymns will suit them but those which are full of Assurance and conscious enjoyment. I admire their confidence, if it is the ruit of the Spirit; but I fear, in many cases, it is the offspring of proud, unhumbled self-conceit. I know that in shaking times, when I am sorely vexed with bodily pain and mental distractions, I am glad enough to say—

"Let me hide myself in You!
Let the water and the blood,
From Your riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power!"

Without boasting, I can declare as much about strong faith in God as most men; and I can usually rejoice in the fullest confidence of my acceptance in the Beloved; but there are times with me of deeply awful depression of spirit, and horror of great darkness—and at such periods my joyous confidence takes the form of humbly pleading the blood once shed for sinners, and saying, with a broken heart—

"Nothing in my hands I bring:
Simply to Your cross I cling."

It seems to me, that humbly resting upon Jesus is the best position for us; and I ask each of you, very affectionately, whether that is your position at this present moment? Does your heart rejoice in the Substitute? Do you rejoice in the language of these two precious verses?—

"When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,

Upward I look, and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died,
My sinful soul is counted free,
For God, the Just, is satisfied
To look on Him, and pardon me."

II. Let us turn to the second part of the subject. The chapter sets forth before us THE EFFICACY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF JESUS.

As soon as the bullock was slain, the priest carefully collected the blood. The bullock was slain in the court of the Israelites; look, there it lies at the foot of the bronze altar, with the blood in a basin. The priest passes into the court of the priests, passes by the golden altar of incense, which stood in the holy place, and proceeds to dip his finger in the basin and to sprinkle the blood seven times towards the veil which concealed the holy of holies. Whether the blood fell on the veil or not, we are not certain; but we have good reason to believe that it was cast upon the veil itself. The veil, of costliest tapestry, would thus become by degrees more and more like a vesture dipped in blood. Seven times towards the veil the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled by the priest. Why did he begin there? It was to show that *our communion with God* is by blood. The veil was not then, of course, torn. It showed that the way of access to God was not then revealed. The sprinkling of the blood showed that the only thing that could open the way of access to God was the blood; that the blood, when it would be perfectly offered, seven times sprinkled, would tear the veil. The blood of Jesus has to the letter fulfilled the type. When our Lord had sprinkled, if I may say so, seven times His own heart's blood upon the veil, He said, "It is finished," and "the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom." Beloved, through the perfect offering of the precious blood, we have access with boldness into this divine grace where we stand; and we who have faith in that blood have intimate communion with the living God, and come near to His mercy seat to talk with Him, who dwells between the cherubim, as a man talks with his friend.

The priest began at the innermost point, because the first thing which a Christian loses through sin is communion with God, and free access to Him, and consequently the first thing to be restored to him must be this communion with his God. Suppose, my brother, my sister, you backslide, there are some things which you will not lose at once. You will still be able to pray in a feeble style; you will still have some sense of acceptance, but certainly your enjoyment and fellowship with God will be suspended as soon as you have fallen from your first estate. Therefore the blood is sprinkled upon the veil to show you that through the blood, and through the blood *only*, you can renew your access. You advanced Christians, you who have lived in the very heart of God, and have stood like Milton's angel in the sun; you who have been made to sit at the banqueting table, and to drink of the wines on the lees well refined; you who have been the King's favorites, and, like Mephibosheth, have always been made to sit at the King's own table, and to eat of the choice portions of His dainties—if you have lost your heavenly fellowship, it is through the

blood, and only through the blood, that you can again have access unto the heart of God.

The next act of the priest was to retire a little from the veil to the place where stood the golden altar of incense, adorned with four horns of gold, probably of a pyramidal shape, or fashioned like rams' horns, and the priest, dipping his finger in the basin, smeared this horn and the other, until the four horns glowed with crimson in the light of the golden candlestick. The horn is always, in the Oriental usage, indicative of strength. Then why was the blood put upon the altar? That incense altar was typical of prayer and especially of the intercession of Christ; and the blood on the horn showed that the force and power of *all-prevailing intercession* lies in the *blood.* Why was this second thing done? It seems to me that the second thing which a Christian loses is his prevalence in prayer. Whereas, first he loses communion with God when he backslides; the next thing he loses is his power in supplication. He begins to be feeble upon his knees; he cannot win of the Lord that which he desires. How is he to get back his strength? Here the great Anointed Priest teaches us to look to the blood for renewed power, for look, He applies the blood to the horns of the altar, and the sweet perfume of frankincense ascends to heaven and God accepts it. O beloved, think of this, Christ's intercessory power with God lies in His precious blood, and your power and mine with God in prayer must lie in that blood, too. Oh, to see the horns of that altar smeared with blood! How can you ever prevail with God *unless you plead the blood of Jesus?* believer, if you would overcome in prayer, tell the Lord of all the groans of His dear Son; never dream of arguing except with arguments fetched from Jesus' wounds—these are potent pleas with God—the bloody sweat, the flagellation, the nails, the spear, the vinegar, the cross—these must be the mighty reasons with which to overcome the Infinite One. Let the altar of your incense be smeared with our Savior's blood!

This being finished, the priest goes backwards still further and enters the court of the Israelites. There stood the great altar of brass, whereon was consumed the burnt offerings; and now the priest, having his basin full of the blood of which only a small quantity had been used in sprinkling the veil and touching the horns of the golden altar, pours the whole of the remaining blood in a great stream at the foot of the altar of burnt offering. What does that typify? Did he not thus teach us that the only ground and basis (for mark, it is put at the foot of the altar), of the acceptance of our persons and of our thank offerings is found in the blood of Jesus? Did it never strike you how the whole tabernacle must have been smeared with blood everywhere? Blood was on every side. The priest himself, when at his work, with garments on which showed every stain, must have looked as though all smeared with gore. You could not look at his hands or at his vestments without seeing blood everywhere; indeed, when consecrated, he had blood on his ear, blood on his foot, blood on his hand—he could not be made a priest without it. The apostle says, "Almost everything under the law was sprinkled with blood." It was blood, blood everywhere. Now, this could have been very far from a pleasant sight, except to the spiritual man who, as he looked at it, said,

"What a holy God is the God of Israel! How He hates sin! See, He will only permit sinners to approach Him by the way of blood!" And then the inquiring mind would ask, "What blood is this which is here intended?" We know that the blood of bulls and of goats was but the visible symbol of the sufferings of Jesus, the great Sacrifice, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for our sins. All the blood-marks pointed to the "Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." Let us rejoice in the precious blood of Christ the Lamb without blemish and without spot, who was foreordained from the foundations of the world, but was manifest in these last days for us.

Will you now make a summary of what has been spoken? Come with me outside the Tabernacle. Let us begin at the opening in its curtains leading to the outer court. We have sinned, and desire acceptance with God; that must be the first blessing. The bronze altar of burnt offerings is standing before us, and we wish to offer our thank offering, may we do so? How can we be accepted? Look at the bottom of the altar! What do you see there? A pool of blood all around it, as though the altar stood in blood! What does this mean? Surely the blood of Jesus is the basis of our acceptance before God, and here we stand as citizens of heaven, not accursed, but beloved; not rejected and abhorred, but elect and blessed through the blood which is the ground of our acceptance as believers and citizens of Zion. Now we have come so far, we remember that we are not only citizens of the New Jerusalem, but priests unto God, and as priests we desire to enter the court of the priests, and offer the incense of praise and prayer. Here we stand as priests, and there is the golden altar, but where is our power to minister before the Lord? How shall we approach with the love of our hearts, our joyful thanks, and our fervent intercessions? Behold the answer to our inquiries! Observe with joy the blood-marks on the four horns! It is not our prayers that will be in themselves prevalent, nor our praises, nor our love; but the BLOOD gives prevalence, acceptance, and power to all. Come here, then, and let us lay our heart itself, all bleeding, upon that altar, and let our prayers and praises rise to heaven, like pillars of smoke, accepted through the blood!

But, beloved, this is not all, we are something more than priests—we are *children* of God, dear to His heart; let us, then, seek fellowship with our Father who is in heaven. How can *we* enter into the most holy place and commune with the God who hides Himself? What is the mode of entrance into that which is within the veil? We look, and lo, the veil is torn, and on the floor, right across where the veil used to hang, we see a line of blood, where, times without number, the blood had been sprinkled; and on the two pieces of the veil through which we pass, we can see many distinct traces of blood; yes, and when we come right up to the mercy seat we can see the blood there, too! What does this mean but that the blood is the means of access to God, and by no other means is He to be approached? When we shall be nearest to God, and see Him face to face, and dwell with Him in heaven forever, it will be because Jesus Christ loved us and died for us, and sprinkled His blood for us that we are permitted to have this close and wonderful communion with God which even angels never had, for even they can only veil their faces with their wings,

and must not dare to look upon God as we shall do, when our eyes shall see Him as our Father and our Friend!

Thus I have tried to set forth the threefold prevalence of the precious blood, but let it not be forgotten that the blood also put away sin; for you find at the end of the chapter, "His sin shall be forgiven." First forgiven, then accepted, then prevalent in prayer, and then admitted into access with boldness to God; what a chain of blessings! All, all through the blood of Jesus!

III. Thirdly, the most painful part of our sermon remains, while I beg you to view THE SHAME WHICH OUR LORD ENDURED.

While it is all so well for us, so sweet for us, I want you now to reflect how bitter, how shameful it was for our Lord! The offerer who brought the sin offering has been forgiven; he has been accepted at the bronze altar; his prayers have been heard at the golden altar; and the veil has been sprinkled on his behalf: but what of the Victim? Draw near and learn with holy wonder! In the first place, albeit that our Lord Jesus Christ was made sin for us, it is noteworthy that, though nearly all the bullock was burned outside he camp, there was one portion left and reserved to be burnt upon the altar of burnt offering—the fat. Certain descriptions are given as to the fat which was to be consumed upon the altar, by which we believe it was intended to ensure that the richest part of the fat should be there consumed. As much as if God would say, "Though My dear Son must be made sin for this people, and consequently I must forsake Him, and He must die outside the camp, yet still He is most dear and precious in My sight, and even while He is a sin offering, yet He is My beloved Son in whom in Himself I am still well pleased." Brothers and sisters, whenever we speak about our Lord as bearing our sins, we must carefully speak concerning Him—not as though God ever did despise or abhor the prayer of His afflicted Son, but only seemed to do so while He stood for us, representatively made sin for us, though He knew no sin. Oh, I delight to think that the Lord smelled a sweet savor even in the cross, and that Jesus Crist is this day a sweet savor unto God, even as a sin offering; the fat, the excellence of His heart, the consecration of His soul, were acceptable to God, and sweet in His esteem, even when He laid upon Him the iniquity of His people! Still, here is the shameful part of it; the priest then took the bullock, and gathering up all the innards, every part of it, the skin, the dung—all mentioned to teach us what a horrible thing sin is, and what the Surety was looked upon as being when He took our sin—he took it all up, and either himself personally, or assisted by others, took it away out of the camp. We are told that in the wilderness, so large was the camp, that it may have been the distance of four miles that this bullock had to be carried. I think I see the sad procession—the priest all smeared with blood, carrying the carcass of the bullock, taking it right away down the long line of tents, first through the abodes of one tribe and then of another, through the long streets of tents, while the people stood at their doors and saw the ghastly sight. It was killed at the altar of burnt offering. Why was it not burnt there? That altar was holy, and as soon as ever sin was laid upon the bullock, it ceased to be any longer looked upon as a holy thing; it could

not, therefore, be burnt in the holy place, it must be taken away. So the priest carried it away—a terrible load—till he reached the usual place where the ashes were kindled, and he put the bullock there, and heaped the hot ashes upon it till the whole smoked up to heaven, and was utterly consumed as a sin offering.

My beloved, try if you can to grasp the idea of Jesus being put away from God. I cannot give you the thoughts, but if you could hear the air pierced with the dreadful cry, *"Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabacthani?"* "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" you would see Christ put away because He was made *sin*. It was not possible for God to look upon sin, even when it was in Christ, with anything like complacency. "It pleased the Father to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." If you have read the order of the burnt offering, you will have noticed that when the bullock of the burnt offering was offered, it was washed, to show the perfection of Christ as He is a sweet savor, all pure and clean; but in this case there is added that humiliating word, "with the dung." What a humiliating type of Christ! Ah, but what are your sins and mine that were laid upon Jesus? How could our iniquities and transgressions be better set forth than by that bleeding, mangled mass which the high priest had to carry out away from the camp, as though it were a thing abhorred, which could not be endured in the camp any longer? It is your Savior made sin for you and put away on your behalf.

After the removal, they gathered the hot ashes; they kindled the fire, and burnt it all. See here a faint image of the fire which consumed the Savior upon Calvary! His bodily pains ought never to be forgotten, because there is so intimate a relation between physical suffering and mental grief, that it would be hard to draw the line; but still the sufferings of His soul must have been the very soul of His sufferings, and can you tell what they were? Have you ever suffered from a raging fever? Have you felt at the same time the pangs of some painful disease? Has your mind refused to rest? Has your brain been tossed like the waves of a sea of fire within your head? Have you questioned whether you should lose your reason or not? Have you ever been near unto distraction? Have you ever been near unto the breaking of the cords of life? If so, you may feebly guess what He suffered when He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," and when He "began to be sorrowful and to be very heavy." Those were the coals of juniper which were being heaped over the sin offering. As you see Jesus scourged by Herod and by Pilate, and afterwards bleeding on the accursed tree, you see the fire of divine wrath consuming the sin offering because our sin had been laid upon Him. I will not dwell longer on this, only ask the Holy Spirit to make you feel the shame that Christ suffered for you. Sometimes I cannot grasp the thought, when I have tried to think that He who made the heavens, to whom the whole blue arch is but as a span, and the depths of the seas as the hollow of His hand, should be made flesh, and then suffer for such an insignificant worm as I am! That He should suffer, however, never amazes me as much as that He should bear *my* sin. Oh, amazing grace! The angels say, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Sabaoth!" What could they have said when He, whom they hymned as "glorious in holiness," bowed

His head and gave up the ghost, because "made sin for us"? Blessed Son of God! Where we cannot understand we will adore!

The apostle Paul suggests to us the most practical conclusion of our sermon. He tells us that as our Savior, having given His blood to be sprinkled within the Tabernacle for us, was then taken outside the camp, so it is our duty, yes, and our privilege, to go forth unto Him outside the camp also, bearing His reproach. You have heard how He was reproached for you; are you unwilling to be reproached for Him? You have heard how He went outside the camp in that shameful manner—are you unwilling to go outside the camp for Him? Too many Christians try to be Christians *in* the camp, but it cannot be done. "Be not conformed to this world, but be you transformed by the renewing of your minds." There is so much of worldly conformity among us; but the promise is not to worldly-minded Christians, but, "Come you out from among them; be you separate; touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you." How much we lose by affinities with the world! How much of distance there is between us and God because of the nearness there is between us and the world! Come out, you lovers of the Savior, and tread the separated way which your Savior walked before you!

And now, should there be any here who are unsaved, I should not wonder but what some of them will make the remark, the almost, no, the quite profane remark, "Why, he spoke so much of blood!" Ah, sinner, and we need to speak much of it to you, for it is your only hope! God will either have *your* blood or *Christ's* blood, one of the two. If you reject Christ, you shall perish in your sin. "The blood is the life thereof," says the Word of God; and your life must be taken unless Christ's life shall die for you. The very heart of Christ was broken to find out the way to save a sinner; and, sinner, there is no other; if you refuse the purple road, you shall never reach the pearly gate. Trust in the blood of Jesus. Do you doubt? How can you? Is there not efficacy enough in the blood of the Son of God to take away sin? Do you contradict God's declared truth, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin"? Oh, believe it, and cast your soul upon it, and we will meet within the veil, one of these days, to sing, "To Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood…to Him be glory forever and ever!" Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
LEV 4:1-21; Heb 13:10-15.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of
C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English,
and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit:
www.spurgeongems.org

STEPHEN'S MARTYRDOM
NO. 740

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING MARCH 17, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."
Acts 7:55, 56.

TRUE Christian zeal will seek to do the highest work of which sanctified humanity is capable. Stephen is first heard of as a distributor of the alms of the church to needy widows. He exercised what was virtually, if not nominally, the deacon's office. Being grave, and not double-tongued, and holding the mystery of the faith in a good conscience, he was well fitted for his work. Doubtless he used the office of a deacon well, and so purchased to himself a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. Although the burdensome duty of serving tables might well have excused him from other service, we soon find him, full of faith and power, doing great wonders and miracles among the people; and not even content with that, we see him defending the faith against a synagogue of subtle philosophical deniers of the truth of God. These, with their allies, made the valiant deacon the object of their attack, and he at once rose to be an irresistible witness for the gospel. Stephen the deacon became Stephen the preacher. This holy man not only used such gifts as he had in one department, but having abilities for a more spiritual form of service, he laid them at once upon the altar of Christ. Nor is this all, he had a higher promotion yet—when he had thus become Stephen the wise apologist and brave defender of the faith, he did not stop there, but he mounted to the highest rank of the Christian army; he gained the peerless dignity, the foremost nobility, the brightest glory—I mean the martyr's name and honor. Stephen the deacon is first Stephen the preacher, and afterwards Stephen, God's faithful and true witness, laying down his life that he may seal his testimony with his blood.

Put a man without zeal into the front, and he will gradually recede into his native insignificance, or only linger in the front to be an impediment and a nuisance; but put a man into the rear of the army of God's elect, and if his soul is full of holy fire, you will soon hear of the unknown Samson in the camps of Dan, and, before long he will dash into the vanguard and make the enemies of God's church know that the Holy Spirit still dwells in the midst of Zion in the men whom He has chosen. If there

are any of my brothers and sisters here whose abilities are as yet dormant, I trust that, without ambitiously seeking the chief places of the synagogue, if they have been useful in any one walk of life, they will inquire whether they may not have talents for a yet wider sphere; since, in these evil days, we have need to use every soldier in the army to the utmost of his or her capacity. When the world is so dark, we had need that every lamp should give some light, and that each lamp should burn as much oil as it will carry, that its light may be of the brightest possible kind. Stephen, as a martyr, is set before us in the words of our text. I shall not so much look upon him as witnessing for the truth, as ask you to look, first, *at the power of the Holy Spirit in him, that you may learn to rely upon that divine power;* secondly, I shall *ask you to look at the source of his dying comfort, that you may learn to gaze upon the same ravishing vision;* and, thirdly, I shall *bid you notice the effect of this heavenly comfort upon him in the hope that we may live in peace and fall asleep in ease, by faith in the same great sight which cheered his dying eyes.*

I. First, then, this morning, I shall want every devout mind to OBSERVE THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AS DEVELOPED IN STEPHEN'S DEATH, IN ORDER THAT WE MAY LEARN TO RELY UPON THAT POWER.

Here our grapes hang in clusters, and we would have you note them one by one. I would have you observe, first, that although Stephen was surrounded by bitter enemies, no doubt railing and caviling, and muttering their observations to disturb him and distract his mind, *yet his defense is wonderfully logical, clear, consecutive, and forcible.* If you read the seventh chapter through, you might think it was delivered from this pulpit to an audience as affectionate, appreciating, and attentive as you may be—it does not read like an address delivered to a furious mob of bigots, gnashing their teeth at the lone, brave man. In calm, cool, deliberate, bold, stinging language, he deals with them fearlessly and without reserve. He takes the sharp knife of the Word and rips up the sins of the people, laying open the inward parts of their hearts, and the secrets of their souls—between the joints and the marrow he deliberately inserts the two-edged sword, and reveals the thoughts and intents of their hearts. He could not have delivered that searching address with greater fearlessness had he been assured that they would thank him for the operation; the fact that his death was certain had no other effect upon him than to make him yet more zealous. What secret spirit helped him thus to speak? Had he prepared that speech with long elaboration and forethought? Had that oration been carefully composed, revised, and learned by heart? Far from it; he was not unmindful of our Savior's words, "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak, for it is not you who speaks but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you." Seized upon, doubtless, without previous notice, and dragged before the council without being allowed a moment for deliberation, Stephen stood

up and defended himself with the truth of God as it is in Jesus, with all the skill of a practiced debater, with all the deliberation of one laboriously prepared, and with all the vigor of one whose zeal was like a fire in his bones. To what do we trace this mouth and wisdom which his enemies could not deny? To what indeed, but to the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit exerts such a power over the human mind that when it is His will, He can enable His servants to collect their scattered thoughts, to concentrate all their powers upon one topic, and to speak the words of truth and soberness with unaccustomed power. Moreover, the Lord can also touch the stammering tongue, and make it as eloquent as the tongue of Isaiah of old to proclaim the truth of God in the name of the Lord. I will not argue, my brothers and sisters that a minister, when called to speak for Christ, ought at all times to speak extemporaneously. I am so far removed from that opinion that I conscientiously believe that when we have the opportunity for studying the Word, if we waste it in idleness, it is mere presumption to trust to the immediate inspiration of the moment; but I will say as much as this, that if the Christian minister, or if any one of you are called to speak for your Master when you can have had no preparation, you may confidently depend upon the Spirit of God to help you in your hour of difficulty—yes, and I will go farther, and say that if more of our ministers believed in the divine power of the Spirit of God to help them in their preaching, their preaching would be more effective, and God would acknowledge it more greatly to the conversion of souls.

It seems to me a curious piece of absurdity, if not a specimen of blasphemy, for a preacher to ask the help of the Holy Spirit in his preaching, and then to pull his manuscript out of his pocket. Where is the room for the Holy Spirit to work? Have they not bolted and barred the door against Him? What thoughts can He suggest? What emotions can He excite? The paper is the guide of the hour. Why, then, should they mock the Holy Spirit by asking for His assistance—an assistance which they will not follow? Or, if I shall have committed every word to memory, and prepared every sentence, and then shall come into the pulpit and ask to have an anointing from the Holy One to help me to speak, what do I but ask Him to do what I do not want Him to do, since I can do quite as well without Him as with Him, and would be thrown off my course if He did assist me? It seems to me that after due study of the Word, if the preacher—if you, dear friend, the teacher—will cast yourself upon the teaching of the Spirit of God, though distractions may occur, though in the congregation or in the Sunday school class there may be much to throw you off track, and to make you lose the thread of your discourse, if you can rest upon the Spirit of God, He will enable you to speak with power, propriety, and personality. It is better to be taught of the Holy Spirit than to learn eloquence from the rules of oratory, or at the feet of masters of rhetoric. The Spirit of God needs to be honored in the church in this respect. I am quite sure that if He were more glorified we should find more who spoke with power, because we would find more who spoke with the Holy Spirit.

Let this first remark stand with you for what it is worth, and I am persuaded that there is far more in it than some will care to see.

Notice next, *the energy of the Holy Spirit conspicuously displayed in the manner and bearing of the martyr.* What a right royal and triumphant bearing the man has! He does not stand in the midst of the raging multitude with his eyes fixed upon the ground as though, humbly patient, and doggedly resigned, he felt crushed and overwhelmed; neither does he cast his eyes around to observe a gap in the dense ring of cruel persecutors; he has no wish to elude the penalty of witness-bearing. He gazes steadfastly up into heaven. They may gnash their teeth, but they cannot disturb that settled gaze. Their noise and vehemence may roar like the raging waves of the sea; but from the serene depth of his inward peace, his soul looks upward to the eternal throne, and is ravished with unutterable delight. He despises the tumult of the people, not because he is contemptuous towards *them*, but because his whole soul is swallowed up in blissful adoration of his God. He looks up to heaven, and what he beholds through its opened portals makes him careless of the bloodthirsty foes below. Wondrous picture! Behold the man of shining countenance steadfastly looking up, as though he tracked the road through which his soul would soon wing its way; as though he saw the angelic bands ascending and descending to minister to him; as though he held perpetual and abiding fellowship with the great Father of Spirits, and was not to be disturbed or distracted by the rage of men. The bearing of many of the martyrs has been singularly heroic. You will be struck, in reading *Foxe's Acts and Monuments,* to find how many of the most humble men and women acted as if they were of noblest blood. In every age the line of martyrs has been a line of true nobility. When the King of France told Bernard Palissy that if he did not change his sentiments, he would be compelled to surrender him to the Inquisition, the brave potter said to the king, "You say I shall be compelled, and yet you are a king; but I, though only a poor potter, cannot be compelled to do other than I think to be right." Surely the potter was more royal than the king. The cases are numberless, and should be as household words among you, in which humble men, feeble women, and little children have shown heroism which chivalry could not equal. The Spirit of God has taken the wise in their own craftiness, and answered the learned out of the mouths of babes. The answers of uneducated persons among the martyrs were frequently so to the point, and hit the nail so well on the head, that you might almost suppose they had been composed by an assembly of divines; they came from a *better* source than that, for they were given by the Holy Spirit. The bearing of the bleeding witnesses for our Lord has been worthy of their office, and right well have they earned the title, "The *noble* army of martyrs."

Now, my brothers and sisters, if you and I desire to walk among the sons of men without pride, but yet with a bearing that is worthy of our calling and adoption as princes of the blood royal of heaven, we must be

trained by the Holy Spirit. Those men who are cowardly, whose profession of religion is so timid that you scarcely know whether they have made it or not; those men who go cap-in-hand to the world, asking leave to live, know nothing of the Holy Spirit. But when the Holy Spirit dwells in a man, he knows the right and holds the right, and is not the servant of men. Most humble among the humble in all things else, when it comes to a matter of conscience, he acknowledges no master but his Master who is in heaven. No child of God need fear the face of the great, for he is greater than they; he is God's true aristocrat—God has put within him a spirit of uprightness and sternness for the right which the world cannot bend, let its blasts howl as they will. I pray God we may learn the manliness of Christianity, for much injury has been done to the faith by professors adopting another mode of procedure, and fawning and cringing before the mighty. That upward glance seems to say to us: "Eyes up, Christian! Eyes up; let your heart go up to heaven; let the desires mount; let the whole soul fly towards heaven." With heaven in our sight, we may walk through the crowds of men as a lion walks through a flock of sheep, and our fellow men shall involuntarily acknowledge our power.

The power of the Spirit was also very conspicuously seen in the case of Stephen in another respect, namely, in *the calm and happy spirit which he manifested.* I see no fear, I mark no sign of trepidation; he wipes no hot sweat from his brow; he faints not, much less does he offer any plea by which he may escape from their cruel hands. He never walked out of that gate of Jerusalem with a more joyous and tranquil spirit, on the brightest day of summer, than on that occasion when they dragged him out to die—still, resigned, calm, and happy. It is a great thing for a Christian to keep himself quiet within when turmoil rules outside. When the mind gets distracted, we are not able to judge of what is wise. A disturbed and distracted spirit generally rushes in foolish haste to escape from the difficulty, and so falls into sin in some form or other. To be calm amid the bewildering cry, to be confident of victory; to be still and know that God is God; to stand still with the children of Israel at the Red Sea, and see the salvation of God; this is hard, so hard that only the divine dove, the Comforter, can bring us from above the power to be so; but when once the art of being still is fully learned, what strength and bliss is in it! How many of us, in the face of death, could return death's stony gaze? If it were now decreed that at this moment you must lay down your life, could you smile? Why, the mere thought of it disturbs you, but the fact would alarm you beyond degree. But not so Stephen, his soul rests at anchor in an unruffled haven. Oh, it is in these solemn moments of test, when we are not merely talking of death and vaingloriously boasting of our love to Christ, but when death actually comes, and our love is sternly put to the trial—it is then that the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit is seen, when He gives to His servants that sweet peace which none can know but the man who enjoys it.

I have not yet declared all the glorious works of the Holy Spirit upon this first Christian martyr: in addition to the accuracy of his defense, and the royalty of his manner, and the happiness of his spirit, the Spirit of God was even more clearly seen in *his holy and forgiving temper.* In Stephen's dying prayer he imitates his Lord: "Lay not this sin to their charge." He stood erect when he prayed for himself, and I know not that he spoke aloud; but when it came to praying for the multitude around him, his spirit acquired a greater vehemence and earnestness. We are told in the first place, that he knelt down, as if to make them see how he prayed, and then he prayed with a loud voice, that they might hear as well as see; he spent his last breath in a loud cry to heaven that his murder might not be laid at the door of his persecutors. O sweet Spirit of the Son of Man lingering still on earth! "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," has been the pattern and the forerunner of thousands of prayers of a similar heavenly character. It has been the mark of a Christian to die patiently, with forgiveness on his lips. Thousands of those who wear the ruby crown this day, and are—

"Foremost of the sons of light,
Midst the bright ones doubly bright,"

passed away from earth with just those very words upon their lips. Surely, this is a work of the Holy Spirit indeed! We can scarcely forgive those who offend us but a little; we find it not altogether easy to live at peace with all men, but to *die* at peace with them, and to die at peace with our murderers, what shall I say of it? Surely, this is what the world cannot understand—a celestial, a divine Virtue, which must be implanted in human hearts by God Himself.

Note once more, the power of the Spirit was seen in enabling Stephen, at such a juncture, when the stones were rattling about his ears, and his body was bruised and mangled by them, *to pray one of the most prevalent prayers that ever went up to heaven.* The prayer we have just mentioned did not die in the air outside Jerusalem's gate; it passed through the gate of pearl, it reached the heart of God, and it obtained an answer. See that eager, impetuous, young man yonder, about 30 years of age. The clothes of the witnesses are laid down at his feet; he desires to have a prominent part in stoning the hated Nazarene; he is one of the most fiery of those ferocious bigots; he belongs to the synagogue of Cilicia, and, having been defeated in argument, he rejoices that harder weapons are at hand; he is glad to see the heretic die; he gloats his eyes with the spectacle, for he feels that Moses and the law, and the rabbis, and the traditions, are this day avenged. Mark that young man well, for Stephen's prayer is meant for him, though he knows it not. It may be that he heard the plaintive petition and despised it. It is just possible that having heard it, he went away to sneer at it, and to remark upon the hypocritical character of those disciples of Jesus who could lisp their Leader's dying words as if they were their own. Yet I think that blessed petition must have rankled in his heart; he must have felt that there was a spirit there far better

than his own. Whether or not that prayer remained with him just then, in later years he must have looked upon Stephen as being, if anyone was, his spiritual father, by whose dying prayer he was begotten unto God. In speaking of his conversion, surely Paul must have thought within himself it was the prayer of Stephen that was the means of changing Saul the persecutor into Paul, the apostle of the crucified Son of God. Ah, well, my friends, you and I cannot always prevail in prayer, even in sunny weather, but what a grand Spirit must that be who could help Stephen unlock heaven's gates in the dreary article of death; to have power with God to pluck the Savior by the sleeve, and to bring Him to save this guilty, raving persecutor, just when the stones were falling upon him, and his flesh was being battered and bruised. O blessed Spirit, though the outward man decays, You do renew the inner man day by day!

Behold, beloved, how independent of outward circumstances the Holy Spirit can make the Christian! See what a bright light may shine within us when it is all dark outside! See how firm, how happy, how calm, how peaceful we may be when the world shakes to and fro, and the pillars of the earth are removed! See how even death itself, with all its terrible influences, has no power to suspend the music of a Christian's heart, but rather makes that music become more sweet, more clear, more heavenly, till the last kind act which death can do is to let the earthly strain melt into the heavenly chorus, the temporal joy into the eternal bliss! Let us have confidence, then, in the blessed Spirit. Are you looking forward, my dear friend, to poverty? Does your business decline? Do you see clearly before you that you will have to put up with the woes of poverty? Fear not; the divine Spirit can give you, in your need, a greater plenty than the rich have in their abundance. You know not what joys may be stored up for you in the cottage which divine grace will make the cottage of content. Are you conscious of a growing failure of your bodily powers? Do you expect to suffer long nights of languishing and days of pain? Oh, be not sad! That bed may become a throne to you. You little know how every pang that shoots through your body may be a refining fire to consume your dross—a beam of glory to light up the secret parts of your soul. Are the eyes failing? Do you expect blindness? Jesus will be your light! Do the ears fail you? Do you hear but few sounds? Jesus' name will be your soul's best music, and His person your dear delight. Socrates used to say—"Philosophers can be happy without music;" and we Christians can be happier than philosophers when all outward causes of rejoicing are withdrawn. In You, my God, my heart shall triumph, come what may of ills without! By Your power, O blessed Spirit, my heart shall be exceedingly glad, even should all things fail me here below.

May this first point be practically serviceable to you! Trust the Holy Spirit: rely firmly upon Him, and He will not allow you to be confounded.

II. THE SOURCE OF RICHEST COMFORT WILL NEXT BE INDICATED, WITH THE HOPE THAT WE MAY LEARN TO LOOK THERE.

It was the end and aim of the Holy Spirit to make Stephen happy. How could this be done? By revealing to him the living and reigning Savior at the right hand of God. Whether or not Stephen saw literally with his eyes the Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God we do not know. It is possible that what is meant here is that his faith became so unusually strong that he had the most clear and vivid sense of Christ's reigning in heaven, so much so that it might be fitly said that he actually saw the Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God. If it were really a supernatural vision, you and I have no ground to expect a repetition of it, but, if it were a vision of faith, as I think it was, there is no sort of reason why we should not enjoy it even now. If we have like precious faith with Stephen, since it is a great fact that Christ is there, there is no reason why our faith should not see what Stephen's faith saw, and there is no reason why this very day our soul's eyes may see Jesus, and our souls may receive the same joy and gladness of a sight of Christ which Stephen obtained.

What, then, did Stephen see? He saw first, that *Jesus was alive.* This is no small thing—

"He lives, the great Redeemer lives—
What joy the blest assurance gives!"

Alive, too, after the crucifixion! Stephen knew that Christ had died upon the cross. In that fact was the confidence of his soul; but he saw that, though once dead and buried, Jesus still lived. Here was great comfort for Stephen: he was not serving a dead Christ; he was not defending the honor of a departed prophet; he was speaking for a friend who still existed to hear his pleadings and to accept his testimony. Stephen argued within himself, "If Christ lives after crucifixion, why should not Stephen live, through Christ, after stoning? If the nails of the cross sufficed not to leave the Savior dead, neither shall the stones from the Jews avail to rob Stephen of resurrection. Jesus rises from His grave, and Stephen shall rise also. No mean assurance was this! It is a rich source of comfort for you and me this day, if conscious of our frailty and of the near approach of mortality; because Jesus lives we shall live also.

Moreover, Stephen not only saw Jesus living, but he knew that *Jesus saw him and sympathized with him.* Is not that the meaning of the attitude which the Lord assumed? We are told that our Lord sits at the right hand of God, "expecting till His enemies are made His footstool," and yet in the text He is not seen as sitting, but as standing. Why standing? One of the old fathers says it was as though the Lord Jesus stood up in horror at the deed which was being done; as though He were about to interpose to help His servant die, or to deliver him out of their hands. He stands up, actively sympathizing with His suffering witness. Well, beloved, this is just what we see in heaven. The Man of Sorrows is alive, and still sympathizes with His people. Though raised to the throne of glory, He is not forgetful of our shame and sorrow. Think not, O child of earth, that the Son of Man has forgotten what temptation means, and is

now a stranger to human weakness and infirmity. "In your entire affliction He is afflicted." He deeply sympathizes with every one of His tried brothers and sisters, and in His measure feels afresh what every member bears. Suppose not that He is an unthoughtful, uncaring spectator of your grief. I tell you, child of God, Christ has risen from His throne to assist you. He stands at this moment in the hour of your extremity, ready to help you. He will send you comfort when you need it, and He will see that your strength shall be to your day. What a sight was this for the dying Stephen! Jesus is living, and living with the same love in His heart which He showed on earth, with the same tender sympathy which He manifested among the 12 when He lingered among the sons of men.

The brightest point in the vision was this—Stephen saw *Jesus standing at the right hand of God.* That was the point in dispute. The Jews said the Nazarene was an impostor. "No," said Stephen, "there He is: He stands at the right hand of God." To Stephen's mind the point was settled by what he saw. This was the main thing—the only thing, indeed, that Stephen cared for; he craved to have his Lord exalted, and he saw Him exalted. The people rage, the rulers take counsel together, but yonder is the King upon the holy hill of God; beyond a doubt He is a reigning monarch, and to Stephen's heart this was all he wished. If any fear had been felt by Stephen, it was not for himself, it was for the church. He thought, "These wolves tear me first: what will become of the rest of the sheep? How will any escape from their fangs?" He looked up, and there stood the Shepherd looking down upon the wolves, and saying to His dearly-purchased sheep, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." That seems to me to be the grandest part of the vision—Christ living, Christ loving, and Christ REIGNING—the triumphant Savior, at the right hand of God.

My brothers and sisters, this doctrine has been to my own soul the only one which has cheered me in times of extreme deep depression of spirit. As I have told you before, so I tell you now—I have known what it is to be brought so low in heart, that no promise of God's Word gave me a ray of the light of God, nor a single doctrine afforded me a gleam of comfort, and yet, as often as I have come across this text, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name," I have always found a flood of joy bursting into my soul, for I have said, "Well, it is of no consequence what may become of me if my name is cast out as evil, and if I myself am left in darkness; if pains should multiply; if sorrows should increase beyond number, it does not matter—I will not lift up a finger as long as my Lord Jesus is exalted." I believe that every genuine Christian heart that loves the Savior feels just that. Like the dying soldier in the hour of battle, who is cheered with the thought, "The general is safe; the victory is on our side; my blood is well spent, my life well lost, to win the victory." Let Christ reign and I will make no bargain with God as to myself. Let Jesus be King the whole world over, I care for nothing else; let Him wear the crown; let the pleas-

ure of the Lord prosper in His hands; let His covenant purposes be fulfilled; let His elect be saved; let the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, why, what matters it even though thousands of us should go pining through the valley of the shadow of death! Our lives and deaths would all be well spent to earn so great a reward as to see Jesus glorified!

I would like to put this telescope then to the eye of every sorrowing Christian here, because having had so sweet an influence upon my own heart, surely it might comfort theirs. Dear friend, you are troubled this morning, you are cast down, you do not prosper as you could wish in heavenly things; well, but Christ is not troubled, He is not cast down; and the great fight, after all, goes rightly enough; God's great purposes are promoted; Christ is glorified. Here are two or three pearls for you, gaze upon them, and prize them. First, remember that your exalted Savior is exalted to *intercede* for *you*. If He has power, He uses it in prayer for you. Christ has no merit which He does not plead for you. Jesus has received no reward, in consequence of His death which He will withhold from you. Dear to the Father He is, but He uses that influence on your behalf. Joseph said to the butler, "Speak for me when it shall be well with you," but the butler forgot him. It is well with Jesus today, and, depend upon it, it is well with you also, for the Well-Beloved cannot forget you; and as He always has the Father's ear, He will pray the Father for you and whatever you need shall surely be given you. Remember too, that Christ has this power not only to intercede for you, but to *prepare a place for you.* Christian, Christ is a King of boundless wealth, and He desires to use the wealth of His royal treasury to furnish that mansion of yours most richly, so as to make it worthy of the giver who shall bestow it upon you. Moreover, Jesus is in heaven *as your representative.* You are virtually in heaven at this very moment in God's esteem. Your representative is there. My head is in heaven, why should I fear? How can God give heaven to the head, and hell to the foot? As sure as Christ is there, every one of those who are virtually united to Him shall be there also. Only prove that Christ is in heaven, and you have proven that every believer must be there, too. Christ's body cannot be mangled. You cannot cut the spiritual body of Jesus into pieces, and throw one limb of it into hell, while the head goes up to heaven. Because He lives, we shall live also; and it is His will that where He is, there should also His people be. Jesus is in heaven full of power—there to intercede, to represent, to prepare; but that far-reaching power darts its rays down to earth.

The keys of *providence* swing at the belt of Christ. Believe it, Christian, nothing occurs here without the permit or the decree of your Savior, who loved you and gave Himself for you. Does the enemy rage? Jesus will put a bit between his jaws, and turn him back. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise You: the remainder of wrath shall You restrain." Your Lord Jesus Christ has all power in heaven and in earth, and all this power He will exert to bring every one, even the weakest of His children, into His

bosom. Blessed be the sweet love of God which has given us an omnipotent Shepherd to watch over us by night and by day! His head is crowned because He has conquered all His foes. Surely, we may see in that crown of victory the indication that no foe shall ever be able to conquer us. I wish that I could bring out to you the sweetness of the thought of Jesus glorified as I have enjoyed it in my own heart; but it charms me to think sometimes, that as surely as sin, death, and hell, are under the feet of the Son of Man, so surely shall these very feet of mine be set upon the dragon's neck. If I am in Christ, as certainly as Jesus is a conqueror, so shall I be more than a conqueror through Him who has loved me. What sweeter sight could Stephen see than this, when the enemy was at his worst, still Christ was unconquered! And Stephen could read in that the fact that Stephen would be unconquered, too; the stones that felled and crushed him would not destroy him; the voice of his blood would cry from the ground, and the spiritual Stephen would become the victor over the hosts of error; the truth would spring out of the dust, and blossom like a sweet flower, and God would be glorified when His servant was slain. Thus I have indicated to you the delightful vision which can give us comfort. Lord, open our eyes to see it!

III. Finally, THE COMFORT ITSELF is worth a moment's consideration.

We do not find that the appearance of Jesus in the heavens stopped the stones. When the Son of Man came into the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the fire did not burn the three holy children, but on this occasion, though the Son of Man was there, the fire did burn Stephen. Stephen's life is not spared. He dies as certainly as if Jesus had not been there. That is the plan of the present dispensation. The Lord Jesus does not come to us to forbid our suffering, nor to remove our griefs, but He sustains us under them. We beseech the Lord three times that this or that may depart from us; it does not depart—that is not the general way with God—but we get the answer, "My strength is sufficient for you; My strength shall be perfect in weakness." It was so with Stephen. The stones fell; they beat about his head; they stopped his eloquent tongue; they dashed into his heaving lungs; they bruised his tender heart. There lay his mangled corpse, an object of love and of lamentation to the saints who were at Jerusalem. The love of Christ had not preserved the flesh. And who ought to expect it? We have heard it said, "If Christ died for His people, how is it that *they* die?" Such questioners forget that the people of God must die because Jesus died: the death of the flesh is no bad thing, but a blessing! It behooves us to tread in the Savior's steps that we also may die unto the flesh, but be quickened in the Spirit. The death of Stephen we do not look upon as a calamity. The death of the flesh was but a necessary fellowship with the crucified Redeemer, for Stephen did not die as to his spirit—that enjoyed immortality which the rugged masses of rock which were heaved upon him could not be injured. Stephen's glorious comfort was in being sustained within,

though not shielded from without—in being preserved as to his inner man, though the outer man was bruised and battered. This is the comfort you and I may expect.

Through the darts we must go, and they must stick in our flesh, but they shall not poison the blood of our soul. Beneath the pitiless storm of hail we must stand, and yet no hailstones shall be able to strike our heart to injure it. Through the furnace we must go, and the smell of fire must pass upon us, but we shall come out of the flaming heat uninjured by the blazing fire. 'Tis ours to suffer and yet to conquer, to die and yet to live, to be buried and yet to rise again. How sweetly is Stephen's triumph pictured in those last words, "He fell asleep." This is the life as well as the death of a Christian. When the world has been most in arms against a believer, it is amazing how God has given sleep to His beloved, how the saint has rested with perfect composure in the sight of his enemies, and his cup has run over in the time of drought. Calmly on the bosom of his God he has laid his head, and left his troubles for his God to bear. This shall be the death of the Christian. Let his death be as painful as that of Stephen's, it shall be quite as composed. He shall shut his eyes to earth and open them to heaven. His body shall but sleep in that royal sepulcher where Christ Himself once reposed, to be awakened by that heavenly trumpeter who shall bring the tidings of resurrection to the sleeping myriads of the saints; courage, brothers and sisters, because the Holy Spirit dwells in us, and because Christ up yonder is triumphant for us, let our tribulations abound, our consolations also shall abound by Jesus Christ, and we shall be more than conquerors through Him who has loved us!

I wish you all had a share in these precious things. If you had, it would not matter how badly I spoke of them; they would charm your souls. But if you do not understand them, I pray that you may. May the Spirit of the Lord open your eyes to see the power of the Spirit and the glory of Christ, and may you and I before long see Him face to face in paradise. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ACTS 6; 7:54-60.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

A TROUBLED PRAYER
NO. 741

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

"Look upon my affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins."
Psalm 25:18.

IF this Psalm were indeed written by David at the time when his son Absalom had raised the rebellion against him, we can readily understand the distinction which he draws between his "affliction," and his "pain." It is a great "affliction" to have a son become a rebel, and that subjects who owed so much to their monarch should become traitors against his gentle government. "Pain" was the acute sensation which David's own heart experienced as the result of such calamity. He knew—

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child."

None of us can guess the "pain" which David must have felt from the "affliction" of having such a son as Absalom; and the "pain" of mind, again, which he felt in being betrayed by his familiar counselor, Ahithophel, and in being forsaken by his subjects who in former days had honored him and rejoiced in him. He asked the Lord, therefore, to look, not only upon the trouble, but also upon the misery which the trouble caused him. "If necessary," says the apostle, "we are in heaviness through manifold temptations"—as if not only the temptations were to be observed, but also the heaviness consequent thereof. So here we may bring before God's notice, not only our trial, but the inward anguish which the trial causes us.

I can understand, also, why David should add, "And forgive all my sins," because he knew that the revolt of Absalom was mysteriously connected with the divine purpose as a chastisement, for his sin with Bathsheba. He recollected how Nathan had told him that he would have war all the days of his life, and now he remembered it all; the bitterness of gall sickened his soul as he remembered that sin which had once been so sweet to his taste. He went back to the fatal day, and the tears stood in his eyes as he thought of all the filth and guilt of his conduct—what a traitor he had been to Uriah—how he had dishonored the name of God in the midst of the whole land. Well might he have said, "Lord, when You look upon this well-deserved affliction, and when You see the pain with which it brings my soul, then though it will bring my sin to Your mind as it does to mine, yet let forgiveness blot it out; yes, not for that sin only,

but for all others that have preceded or followed it, grant me a gracious pardon—forgive, I pray You, all my sins."

I. It is well for us, dear friends, WHEN OUR PRAYERS ABOUT OUR SORROWS ARE LINKED WITH PRAYERS ABOUT OUR SINS—WHEN, BEING UNDER GOD'S HAND, OUR SOUL IS NOT WHOLLY TAKEN UP WITH OUR PAIN, BUT WE ALSO REMEMBER OUR OFFENSES AGAINST GOD.

I do not think it would have been worth one's while to have preached from the text if it had only said, "Remember my affliction and my pain," but when it is, "Look upon my affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins," the two things put together are very instructive; let us seek to get some edifying counsel from them.

Our sorrows are profitable when they bring our sins to our minds. Some sorrows may do this by *giving us time for thought.* A sickbed has often been a place of repentance. While the man was occupied with his daily work, and the active labor of his hands, or could be from morning till night at business, sin escaped his notice; he was too busy to care about his soul; he had too much to do with earth to remember heaven. But now he cannot think of business, or if he does, he can get no profit or satisfaction from all his thoughts; now he cannot go to his work, but must lie upon his bed until his health is recovered; and oftentimes the quiet of the night, or the stillness of the day which once was given up to toil and drudgery, has been blessed of God to work a solemn stillness in the soul in which the voice of God has been heard, saying, "Turn unto Me! Turn unto Me! Why will you die?" Some of you do not often hear God's voice. You are in the midst of the clitter-clatter of this great city, and the roar and din of it are so perpetually ringing in your ears, that the still small voice of your heavenly Father you do not hear, and it may, perhaps, be a great mercy to you if, in your own house, or in the ward of an hospital, you may be compelled to hear Him say, "Turn unto Me! Turn unto Me! For I will have mercy upon you!"

Other afflictions remind us of our sins *because they are the direct result of transgression.* The profligate man, if God should bless those scourges of the body which have even sprung from his own vices, may find the disease to be a cure for the misdemeanors which produced it. We ought to thank God that He will not let us sin without chastisement. If any of you are sinning, and find pleasure without penalty in the self-indulgence, do not congratulate yourself upon the apparent immunity with which you violate the laws of virtue, for *that* is the badge of the reprobate. To sin and never smart, is the mark of those who will be damned; their smart, like their doom, being in reserve and stored up for sorer judgment. But if any man among you here is now smarting for the sin he has committed, I will not say, let him be hopeful, but I will say, let him be thankful; let him remember that evidently God has not quite given

him up—He has touched him with the rod, but He has not thrown the reins upon his neck; He has put a curb in his mouth, and He is pulling him up sharply. God grant that it may be blessed to turn him from his wild career. The extravagant man who has spent his money, and finds himself in rags, ought to look upon his sins through his rags—his present poverty may well remind him of his previous sinful ways. The man who has lost a friend, through ingratitude, and now needs a friend but cannot find one, may thank himself for it, and be reminded of his baseness by his bankruptcy. There are many other sins, though we have not time to mention them, which are evidently the fathers of sorrows; and when you get the sorrowful offspring, you should think of the guilty parentage—and if you would be rid of the child, go to God and ask Him to deliver you from the sin, and divorce you from the transgression that produced it.

Other sorrows likewise remind us of our sins because they bear their likeness. It has been well remarked that oftentimes when God would punish us, He just leaves us to eat the fruit of our own ways. He has nothing more to do than to let the seed which we have sown ripen, and then allow us to eat it. How often in reading the Holy Scriptures may you observe the quality of men's sins in the nature of their punishment! Jacob deceived his father and what then? Why, he was being deceived all his life. He was a great bargain-maker, so everybody cheated him, of course. He would use his wily cleverness, and as he would be clever and supplant, he had to become a dupe and be supplanted; that was the misery of his life, because it was the besetting sin of his character. Now, when a man loses money, loses it continually, notwithstanding all the skill and efforts he can employ, I would have him ask himself whether there may not have been some sin in connection with his money which has brought the punishment on him. He may have loved it too much; he may have obtained it in an illegal way; he may not have used it when he had it in a proper spirit; it may have been dangerous for it to remain with him lest it should have corroded his heart by its own corruptness. The losses a man suffers in business, I doubt not in many cases, and I am sure of it in some cases, ought to make him look earnestly at the way in which they came upon him. When we have heard of some who have gained wealth by one speculation, and have lost it again by another speculation, I think it ought to be made the subject of inquiry with them how far their dealings were lawful, if indeed it were lawful for them to have entered upon such traffic in any shape or form; and whether God may not have had a controversy with them in their counting-house.

Is this an obligation with money? Surely it often is so with the rearing of your family. If your affliction should come through your children turning out evil in life, or through what is a far lighter affliction—though perhaps you may not think it so—through your children dying in infancy,

you may say to yourselves, "How have I behaved towards those children?" Is my child willful and disobedient? Then how about the training, and the management that I have observed? Is my child perverse, vicious, worldly? How about my example as it was seen at the family hearth? May not my boy's sins be only a reproduction of my own—the fledglings that I have hatched, roost in my family, disturb my peace, and bring me sorrow? May not my daughter's stubbornness of heart be only my own hardness that breaks out in the girl? Might I not hear the voice of God saying to me, "See how you treated Me, and is it not meet you should eat the fruit of your own ways? You are a father, and how do you like to be thus treated—to be slighted in your discipline, and your affections set at nothing?" So I might continue, passing from our households to our respective positions in society. We sometimes find ourselves unable to maintain our station. With embarrassment and mortification we have to take a lower place, and may we not then ask, Did we acquit ourselves before God in all that we might have done in our former standing? Did the rank we held elevate us, and puff us up with vanity? At any rate, we may bring ourselves to great searching of heart. When sorrow takes any particular shape, it suggests its own particular questions. The problem must be studied to get at the solution.

With regard to sickness, I am not certain whether the chastening hand of God for sin ought not to be more immediately recognized than is now for the most part common among us. In one sense God never punishes His people for sin. There is nothing vindictive in the rod He uses, and nothing healing in the sufferings they endure; for God's redeemed people were punished in Christ, and it cannot be therefore that the penalty of the law is exacted on them a second time. Yet there is a sense in which the church of God, under paternal discipline, is continually exercised with chastisement. Do you remember the apostle's words about the Corinthian church? They had fallen into a very lax method of receiving the Lord's Supper; everyone brought his own bread and wine, some of them were full, and others were hungry; beside which, other breaches of church order were rife among them; and the apostle says, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Therefore I gather that sickness at any rate in the early church was known to be sent by God upon the members for ecclesiastical offenses. I am not sure whether in like manner sacred corrections, though in a way not so easily discoverable, may not still be in exercise among the members of the Christian church. I see that in ordinary providence, God visits men; and as there is a special providence for His people, surely there is nothing harsh or unwarrantable in attributing a strong flood of adversity, as well as a refreshing stream of prosperity, to the hand of the Lord! When a Christian, therefore, finds himself chastened in his body, he should go to God with this question, "Show me why You contend with me. Why do

You lay Your rod upon me, my Father? You do not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. It is not from the heart, as though You had ceased to love; it must be from Your unerring judgment where in measure You do rebuke; tell me, therefore, my Father, what is the cause? If You see a reason, tell me what that reason is—

'The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Your throne,
And worship only Thee.'"

Our sins, then, may sometimes be discovered by the very image of our sorrows.

What a great blessing it is to us when our sorrows remind us of our sins by *driving us out of an atmosphere of worldliness!* There is our nest and a very pretty, round, snug nest it is; and we have been very busy picking up all the softest feathers that we could find, and all the prettiest bits of moss that earth could yield, and we have been engaged night and day making that nest soft and warm. There we intended to remain. We meant for ourselves a long indulgence, sheltered from inclement winds, never to put our feet among the cold dewdrops, or to weary our feathers by mounting up into the clouds. But suddenly a thorn came into our breast; we tried to remove it, but the more we struggled the more it chafed, and the more deeply the thorn fixed itself into us. Then we just began to spread our wings, and as we mounted it would seem as though the atmosphere had changed, and our souls had changed too with the mounting, and we began to sing the old forgotten song—which in the nest we never should have sung—the song of those who mount from earth and have communion with the skies. Yes, when God is pleased to take away our health, our comfort, our children, our friends, it very frequently happens that then we think of Him. We turn from the creature with disgust; we leave the broken cisterns because they hold no water, and begin to look out for the overflowing fountain; and so our sorrows, driving us to God, make us, in the light of His countenance, to behold and to grieve over our sins. This is a great blessing to us.

Sometimes, again, our sorrows *remind us of our ingratitude.* You are unwell—now you recollect how ungrateful you were for your health. You are poor—"Ah," you think to yourselves, "I used to grumble once over a good meal that I would be glad to have now." "Ah," you say, "those garments that I used to think so shabby, how much I would prize their warmth now!" It is said that we never know the value of mercies till we lose them. It is a great shame that such a proverb should be true. We ought to be grateful to God without needing the bitter teaching of adversity. Our sorrow thus administers a rebuke, and kindles in us a remembrance of the goodness that we had never welcomed with our praise till the shadows fell upon us, and the night hid it from our view. No crime

among men is accounted baser than ingratitude, but few sins we less bewail before God. Bunyan has well said that he who forgets his friend is ungrateful to him, but he who forgets his Savior is unmerciful to himself. And I remember some other author who says, that we are never surprised at the sunrise of our joys, as we are at their sunset; on the contrary, when storms of sorrow burst upon us we are sorely amazed, but when they pass away we take it as a matter of course. You all know how sad a blemish it was upon the character of Hezekiah that he rendered not again unto the Lord according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up in vainglory. The provocation of a thankless heart to a merciful God is no light matter. As the guilt is heavy, let our repentance be sincere.

Sometimes, again, sorrow reminds us of the sin of *lack of sympathy with those in like sorrow.* "Ah," says one, "I used to laugh at Mrs. So-and-So for being nervous; now that I feel the torture myself, I am sorry that I was ever hard upon her." "Ah," says another, "I used to think of such-and-such a person that he must be a fool to be always in so gloomy a state of mind; but now I cannot help sinking into the same desponding frames, and oh, I would to God that I had been more kind to him!" Yes, we would feel more for the prisoner if we knew more about the prison; we would feel more for the poor if we understood more of the pangs of need. Our sorrows may often help to remind us of our harshness towards some of the best of God's afflicted ones.

And I think also that affliction may be sent to admonish us *of our neglect of divine teaching.* "Why that rod?" "Why that whip, and that bridle?" Because I have been like the horse and the mule, which have no understanding. Had I listened to the voice of God that I heard from the pulpit; or had I listened to the counsels given to me in the pages of Scripture; or if I had even noticed the dictates of my own conscience; yes, had I been more jealous of the motions of the Holy Spirit in my soul, I might never have had all this trouble upon me. You know the old fable we used to read in our school books about the boy in the apple tree who would not come down when the good man with soft words admonished him. Then the man took to throwing dirt at him, but still he would not listen, and at length the man began throwing stones, and compelled the boy to come down. Oh, when God takes Himself to stones, and we get cut with them, we might well say to ourselves, "Ah, light afflictions, you would not do! We laughed at the kind words; and even the dirt, which struck our conscience without wounding our flesh, would not do, and now He has come to blows with us. God is always loath to use the rod. He is an unwise father who never chastens, but a much worse father is he who chastens for nothing. God will chasten His people, but it takes Him a long time to bring Himself to use the rod. He does not wish to strike His children; He delights in their happiness, and not in their sorrow; and when

at last He does come to it, it is—if I may use such an expression in reference to Him—because our ill manners force Him to it. O Christian, in these your sorrows, be humble before the Lord your God; but still use Job's inquiry, "Show me why You contend with me."

I wish that some here, who have not the fear of God before their eyes, would look at it in this light. If you are inclined to pray about your troubles, take your sins into consideration, too. If you feel that you must go to God under the particular trial which is vexing you at present, go to Him about your besetting sins as well. Make the two into one bundle, and go to Him, and say, "Look upon my affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins." This, then, is our first remark. It is fit that our sorrows should bring our sins to remembrance.

II. Secondly, IT IS WELL WHEN WE ARE AS EARNEST ABOUT OUR SINS AS WE ARE ABOUT OUR SORROWS.

This is the mark of a genuine penitent. I think you will have noticed in the late "Report" of the chaplain of Newgate, the remark that many of the prisoners will pretend very great repentance when the chaplain is talking to them about spiritual things; but the chaplain can very readily discover those who are not truly penitent, by their constantly trying to bring him round to tell them something about their punishment; before the trial they frequently ask for information as to what term of imprisonment—how many months or years—they are likely to get. Then, when they are undergoing punishment, they frequently try to get some trifling favor through the means of the chaplain, showing that they think more of the punishment than of the theft; like the unhappy wretch in the condemned cell, who often repents of the gallows that is to end his career, but does not repent of the murder that cut short his victim's life. There are many such. So, if I go to God and only ask to have my sorrows taken from me, what is that? I am no true penitent; I am like the child who cries bitterly because he smarts, but when the smart is over, he goes back to the offense again. If we were true children of God, and had a truly repentant spirit, we would feel the rod to be less than nothing compared with the sin. We would say, "Lord, strike me; if You have but forgiven me I can bear the strokes; strike, Lord, strike as hard as You will, for my sin is forgiven." A good child will say, "My Father, you have forgiven me the offense; ah, well, if I must be chastened, I will cheerfully bear it, for my sorrow is not that I smart, but that my sin should have caused you to be angry, and to make me smart."

This, then, is the mark of a genuine penitent, that he is as earnest about his sins as he is about his sorrows. Your trials have never worked in you what they were meant for until it is so. God sends your trial to make you see yourself—your weaknesses, your folly, your sinfulness, your distance from Him; and when those sins, those sweet sins of yours become bitter, when your soul nauseates and loathes them—then, prob-

ably, your affliction will be taken from you; but if you still yield to your sins with your left hand, and would gladly lay hold of God's mercy with your right, there is need that the rod be laid on your back again, and again, and again, for you have not yet feared the rod nor Him who has appointed it. Let any of you who are in trouble here, mend your prayer tonight. If you have been saying, "Lord, take away the sickness from my dear child," you should say, "Lord if it is Your will, heal my child, but forgive my sin." Or, if any of you are very poor tonight, or, if you are not well, and you have a sense of sin, I pray you, I entreat you, as you kneel by your bedside—which I trust you all will—while you ask God to restore your health, or to remove your poverty, be quite as earnest about the forgiveness of your sins, or else it will prove two things—that you are not a genuine penitent, and that, therefore, the affliction has not worked in you its great design.

III. But, thirdly, IT IS WELL TO TAKE BOTH SORROW AND SIN TO THE SAME PLACE.

It was to God that David took his sorrow; it was to God that David took his sin. Observe, then, *we must take our sorrows to God.* Ah, my dear sister over yonder, where do you take your sorrows? Why, to your next door neighbor, to Mrs. This, and to Mrs. That! We are very, very fond of pouring out our tales of woe into the ear of some earthly friend. That may be a slight relief if discreetly done, but I think the verses of the hymn are not wrong which say—

"Have you no words? Ah, think again;
Words flow apace when you complain,
And fill your fellow creature's ear
With the sad tale of all your care.
Were half the breath thus vainly spent
To heaven in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would more often be
'Hear what the Lord has done for me!'"

Some children run and tell their mother, or tell their father; do you the same. Go and tell your Father; you can tell your brethren afterwards if you will, but you had better let your Father know first. I think we should often hesitate to mention our troubles lest we should depress our fellow creatures. I am sure we would hesitate to mention them to men if we made it a rule to first bring them before our God. Your little sorrows you may take to God, for He counts the hairs of your head; your great sorrows you may take to God, for He holds the world in the hollow of His hand. Go to Him, whatever your present trouble may be, and you shall find Him willing and able to relieve you.

But we must also *take our sins to God.* Possibly this is a more difficult point. The sinner thinks that he must fight this battle for himself, wrestle with his own evil temper himself, and he himself must enter into conflict with his lusts and his besetting sins; but when he comes into the fight,

he soon meets with defeat, and then he is ready to give it all up. Take your sins to God, my brothers and sisters. Take them to the cross that the blood may fall upon them to purge away their guilt, and take away their power. Your sins must all be slain. There is only one place where they can be slaughtered—the Altar where your Savior died. If you would flog your sins, flog them with the whip that tore your Savior's shoulders. If you would nail your sins fast, drive the same nails through them which fastened your Lord to the cross; I mean let your faith in the Great Surety, and your love to Him who suffered so much for you, be the power with which you do conflict with evil. It is said of the saints in heaven, "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb." That is how you must overcome. Go to Jesus with your sins; no one else can help you; you are powerless without Him. You may confess all your sins *to* Him, with a view of leaving them all with Him. He receives sinners, He receives their sins too when they are brought to Him in penitence; for God has made to meet upon Him the iniquity of all His people, and you may take your sins and leave them in the hands of Jesus, who will counter-plead them with His merits, and put them away in His mercy, and so shall you come away rejoicing.

And, as we have remarked that we are not to take up the battle with our sorrows alone, nor with our sins alone, we may further say that *the most sorrowful and the most sinful are welcome to the Lord Jesus.* The most sorrowful may come; I mean those in despair, those who are at their wits end, those poor souls who, through superabundant difficulty are ready to do the most unreasonable things—ready, it may even be, to give way to that wicked, Satanic temptation of rushing from this present life into a world unknown by their own hand. Go, sorrowful one, go now to Jesus, whose tender heart will feel for you. Has your friend forsaken you? Have your lover and your acquaintance become your enemies? Seek no human sympathy just now, but first and foremost, in a flood of tears, reveal your case to the great invisible helper. Kneel down and tell Him all that racks your spirit and fills your tortured mind, and plead the promise that He will be with you, and you shall find Him true though all else be false. And, as the most sorrowful, so the *most* sinful are welcome to Christ—the sinful certainly, but the *most sinful* especially. If your sin has become so outrageous that it would be wrong for me to mention it here; if it has become so tremendous in its power, that, like the chain and ball at the convict's feet, you cannot escape from it, yet still come with all your sins to Jesus. You vilest sinner out of hell; you who are nearest to the gates of hell; you who have had fellowship with devils till you have become almost a devil yourself; you who have lain steeped in the scarlet of sin till it has ingrained and entered into the very warp and woof of your being; you who are all over black within and without, go to the Savior, and take these words in your mouth—"Look upon my affliction and my

pain, and forgive all my sins." And suppose the two conditions should have met in your heart, that you are at the same time the most sorrowful and the most sinful? Still go, for the gates of mercy are very wide. When Christ opened the holy of holies, He did not make a little slit, but the veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom, so that the biggest sinner who ever lived might come through it to the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. Oh, the amazing mercy of God! "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts." Sin is, after all, a thing of the creature, but mercy is an attribute of the Creator, and the Creator's attribute swallows up the creature's fault. Thus says the Lord, "I will take away their iniquities, and cast them into the depths of the sea." The most sorrowful and the most sinful may go.

And let us add that *God can with equal ease remove our sorrows and our sins.* It is amazing how difficulties fly when omnipotence encounters them! The sick man who has been given up by the physician has often recovered; and it has been, perhaps, his mercy that the physician gave him up, for where man has come to an ending, God has come to a beginning. The old proverb says that, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity," and most certainly that is true. God has but to will it and fevers fly, and diseases disappear. As the soldier goes at the captain's bidding, so does God say to Death, "Go," and he goes, or "Come," and he comes. Thus is it in our circumstances. How very often a day which opened as black as gathering clouds could make it, has ended with a bright sunset! How frequently the beggar has found himself lifted up from the dunghill, and made to sit among princes! I would not wonder but what some of you, in looking back and remembering the circumstances you are now in, are quite surprised to find yourselves where you are. This very morning I was talking with a gentleman who said to me, "I cannot bear waste in my household, and one reason is this—if ever there was a poor wretch who could live on hard fare once, and envy the very dogs a piece of bread, I am just that one; but God has been pleased to prosper me, and I often look back upon that season of poverty and of need, and thank Him for having helped me through it." Well, you see, dear friends that God can turn the wheel, and make the bottom spoke to be the uppermost one, and He can do it all in a few days. Come then, though sin and sorrow rest like a double burden upon our body and soul, let us go to Him and say, "Look upon my affliction, and my pain; and forgive all my sins."

IV. Perhaps our last observation is more strictly to the text than anything else. It is that WE ARE TO GO TO GOD WITH SORROWS AND WITH SINS IN THE RIGHT SPIRIT.

You notice that all that David asks about his sorrow is, *"Look upon* my afflictions and my pain." But the next petition is more express, definite, decided, plain—*"Forgive* all my sins." Some people would have put it,

"Remove my affliction and my pain, and look at my sins." But David does not say so; he says, "Lord, as for my affliction and my pain, I do not say much about that—Lord look at it; I will leave that to You; I would be glad to have it removed; do as You will; look at it; consider it; but as for my sins, Lord, I know what I want there—I must have them forgiven; I cannot bear them." A Christian counts sorrow lighter in the scale than sin; he can bear that his troubles should continue, but he cannot endure the burden of his guilt, or the weight of his transgressions. Here are two guests come to my door, both of them ask to spend time with me. The one is called *Affliction;* he has a very grave voice, and a very heavy hand, and he looks at me with fierce eyes. The other is called *Sin,* and he is very soft-spoken, and very fair, and his words are softer than butter. Let me scan their faces, let me examine them as to their character, I must not be deceived by appearances. I will ask my two friends who would lodge with me to open their hands. When my friend Affliction, with some little difficulty, opens his hand, I find that, rough as it is, he carries a jewel inside it, and that he meant to leave that jewel at my house. But as for my soft-spoken friend Sin, when I force him to show me what that is which he hides in his sleeve, I find that it is a dagger with which he would have stabbed me. What shall I do, then, if I am wise? Why, I should be very glad if they would both be good enough to go and stay somewhere else, but if I must entertain one of the two, I would shut my door in the face of smooth-spoken Sin, and say to the rougher and uglier visitor, Affliction, "Come and stay with me, for maybe God has sent you as a messenger of mercy to my soul." *"Look upon* my affliction and my pain, and *forgive* all my sin." We must be more express and explicit about sin than we are about trouble. Take the two expressions together, use them, and whether you blend, or contrast them, either or both will prove to be full of instruction.

Before I close my sermon and dismiss this assembly, it may be necessary to notice some among you who have no affliction or pain. In too many instances I am afraid you have sin, so the latter part of the text will well suit your case. But oh, if you have not any affliction or pain, nor yet any cause of fear because your sins are forgiven, let me then suggest to you that you should be exceedingly happy. Your cup should overflow with joy. I do not think, brothers and sisters that you and I rejoice enough. When engaged this morning, seeing inquirers coming in one after another, I thought within myself, "I have known the time, when I first began to preach the gospel, that one soul God had given me as a fruit of my ministry, made me so happy that I was ready to leap out of the body. Truly it is a happy thing to be the means of bringing one soul to Christ." The poet says that—

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

But a thing of divine grace is much more truly so, for the things of beauty here on earth may be consumed, but a work of grace is everlasting. To be the means of saving one soul ought to set a silver bell ringing in your hearts that will never stop. You will say, "I am very poor, and very sick, but I have not lived for nothing, there will be one gem in the Redeemer's crown that came there through my instrumentality; there will be one voice in the orchestra of the skies, which, humanly speaking, would not have been there if the Lord had not enabled me by His grace to be the means of bringing that soul to Christ." This ought to make us joyful. But then I thought, here have I been seeing 30 today, and most of them owed their conversion to the preaching of the gospel here, and I have seen, perhaps, in my little lifetime, several thousands of souls, and know of many others whom I never saw, who have been brought to Christ through our instrumentality. What, down-hearted, and sometimes wretched and distracted with care after this? I thought to myself, what a fool I am! And I suspect that if you and I, or any of us, were to consider the goodness of God to us, the fact that our names are written in heaven, that Christ is ours, that heaven is ours, that we are the children of God, and that we are justified by faith—we would say, "Why, why am I moaning and groaning about these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, and which will work out for me a far more exceedingly and eternal weight of glory? Come, my soul, take down the harp, and let your fingers roam among its strings. Say with old Herbert—

"My God, my God,
My music should find You
And everything shall have its attribute to sing."

So, if we cannot go to God, asking Him to look on our affliction, let us ask Him to look upon our joy, and to help us to increase it, and to grow in it, and then to keep us from sin in the future, and to lead us in the paths of duty and of blessed service, to the honor of His name and the comfort of our own souls.

May the Lord give you, in parting, His own blessing.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 25.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

A SERMON TO OPEN NEGLECTERS AND NOMINAL FOLLOWERS OF RELIGION
NO. 742

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 24, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE AGRICULTURAL HALL, NEWINGTON.

"But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not:' but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second and said, likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' and went not. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him," The first." Jesus said to them, "Verily I say to you, that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him."
Matthew 21:28-32.

THE sight of this vast arena, and of this crowded assembly, reminds me of other spectacles which, in days happily long past, were seen in the amphitheatres of the old Roman Empire. Around, tier upon tier, were the assembled multitudes, with their cruel eyes and iron hearts; and in the center stood a solitary, friendless man, waiting till the doors of the lion's den should be lifted up, that he might yield himself up a witness for Christ and a sacrifice to the popular fury. There would have been no difficulty then to have divided the precious from the vile in that audience. The most thoughtless wayfarer who entered into the amphitheater, would know at once who was the disciple of Christ and who were the enemies of the Crucified One. There stood the bravely-calm disciple, about to die, and all around, in those mighty tiers of the Coliseum, or of the amphitheatre of some provincial town, as the case might be, there sat matrons and nobles, princes and peasants, commoners and aristocrats, senators and soldiers—all gazing downward with the same fierce, unpitying look; all boisterous for their heathen gods, and all vociferous in the joy with which they gazed upon the agonies of the disciple of the hated Galilean, butchered to make a Roman holiday. Another sight is before us today, with far more happy associations; but alas, it is a far more difficult task this day to separate the chaff from the wheat, the precious from the vile, than in the day when the apostle fought with beasts at Ephesus. Here, in this arena, I hope there are hundreds, if not thousands, who would be prepared to die for our Lord Jesus; and in yonder crowded seats, we may count by hundreds those who bear the name and accept the gospel of the Man of Nazareth; and yet, I fear, that both in these living hills on either side, and upon this vast floor, there are many enemies of the Son of God, who are forgetful of His righteous claims—who have cast from them those cords of love which should bind them to His throne, and have never submitted to the mighty love which showed itself in His cross and in His wounds. I cannot attempt the separation. You must grow together

until the harvest. To divide you were a task which at this hour angels could not perform, but which one day they will easily accomplish, when at their Master's bidding, the harvest being come, they shall gather together first the tares in bundles to burn them, and afterwards the wheat into Jehovah's barn. I shall not attempt the division, but I shall ask each man to attempt it for himself in his own case. I say unto you, young men and maidens, old men and fathers, examine yourselves this day whether you are in the faith. Let no man take it for granted that he is a Christian because he has helped to swell the numbers of a Christian assembly. Let no man judge his fellow, but let each man judge himself. To each one of you I say, with deepest earnestness, let a division be made by your conscience, and let your understandings separate between him who fears God and him who fears Him not.

Though no man clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side, shall go through the midst of you to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry for all the abominations of this city, let conscience take the inkhorn and honestly make the mark, or leave the favored sign unmade, and let each man question himself this morning, "Am I on the Lord's side? Am I for Christ, or for His enemies? Do I gather with Him, or do I scatter abroad?" "Divide! Divide!" they say in the House of Commons; let us say the same in this great congregation this day. Political divisions are but trifles compared with the all-important distinction which I would have you consider. Divide as you will be divided to the right and to the left in the great day when Christ shall judge the world in righteousness. Divide as you will be divided when the bliss of heaven, or the woes of hell, shall be your everlasting portion! If the whole of us were thus divided into two camps, and we could say these have made a covenant with God by sacrifice, and those on the other hand are still enemies to God by wicked works, looking at the last class we might still feel it necessary by way of personal application to make a division among them; for although all unbelievers are alike unpardoned and unsaved, yet they are not alike in the circumstances of their case and the outward forms of their sins. Alike in being without Christ, they are still very varied in their mental and moral condition. I trust I was guided by the Spirit of God to my text this morning, for it is of such a character, that while it enables me to address the whole mass of the unconverted, it gives me a hopeful opportunity of getting at the conscience of each by dividing the great company of the unconverted into two distinct classes. O that for each tribe of unbelievers, there may be a blessing in store this day.

First, we shall speak to *those who are avowedly disobedient to God;* secondly, to those who are *deceptively submissive to Him.*

I. First, we have a word for THOSE WHO ARE AVOWEDLY DISOBEDIENT TO GOD. There are many such here. God has said to you as He says to all who hear the gospel, "Son, go work today in My vineyard." And you have replied, perhaps honestly, but certainly very boldly, very unkindly, very unjustly, "I will not." You have made no bones about it, but given a refusal point-blank to the claims of your Creator. You have spoken your mind right out, not only in words, but in a more forcible and unmistakable manner, for actions speak far more loudly than words. You have said, over and over again, by your actions, "I will not serve God, or

believe in His Son Jesus." My dear friend, I am glad to see you here this morning, and trust that matters will change with you before you leave this hall; but at present you have not yielded even an outward obedience to God, but in all ways have said, "I will not." *Practically* you have said, "I will not worship God, I will not attend a place of worship on Sunday—it is weariness intolerable to me. I shall not sing the praise of my Maker—I will not pretend to bless the God for whom I have no love. In public prayer I shall not join—I have no heart for it. I shall not make a pretense of repeating morning and nightly prayer in private—what is the good of it? I will not pray at all; I do not believe in its efficacy, and I will not be such a hypocrite as to follow a vain practice in which I have no belief whatever. As for what is called sin, I love it and will not give it up." You are proud of being called an honest man, for you acknowledge the claims of your fellow men upon you, but you scorn to be thought religious, for you do not admit the rights of your Maker. To the righteous requests of others you yield a cheerful obedience, but to the just and tender requests of God you give a plain and evident denial. As clearly as actions can speak, you say by your neglect of Sunday, by your disregard of prayer, by your never reading the Bible, by your perseverance in known sin, and by the whole course of your life, "I will not." Like Pharaoh, you have demanded, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" You are of the same mind as those of old who said, "It is vain to serve God, and what profit is there if we keep His ordinances?"

Moreover, my friend, you have not as yet given an assent to the doctrines of God's Word; on the contrary, *intellectually* as well as practically, you go not at God's bidding. You have set up in your mind the idea that you must understand everything before you will believe it—an idea, let me tell you, which you will never be able to carry out, for you cannot understand your own existence; and there are ten thousand other things around you which you never can comprehend, but which you must believe or remain forever a gigantic fool. Still you cavil at this doctrine and that doctrine, railing at the gospel system in general; and if you were asked at a working man's conference, why you did not go to a place of worship, you would perhaps say that you kept away from worship because you did not like this doctrine or that. Let me say on my own account, that as far as I am personally concerned, it is a very small consideration to me whether you like my doctrine or do not; for your own sake I am anxious above measure that you should believe the truth of God as it is in Jesus; but while you live in sin, your dislike of a doctrine will very probably only make me feel the more sure of its truth, and lead me to preach it with more confidence and vehemence. Do you think that we are to learn God's truth from the likes or dislikes of those who refuse to worship Him, and need an excuse for their sins? O unconverted men and women, it is very long before we shall come to you to learn what you would have us preach, and when we fall so low as to do that, you, yourselves, will despise us. What? Shall the physician ask his patient what kind of medicine he would wish to have prescribed? Then the man needs no physician, he can prescribe for himself. Show the doctor out at the back door directly. What is the use of such a physician? Of what service is a minister who will cater to depraved tastes and sinful appetites, and

say, "How would you like me to preach to you? What smooth things shall I offer you?" Ah souls, we have some higher end to be served than merely pleasing you! We would save you by distasteful truths of God, for honeyed lies will ruin you. That teaching, which the carnal mind most delights in, is the most deadly and delusive. With many of you, your beliefs, and tastes, and likes must be changed, or else you will never enter heaven. I admit that in a measure I like your honesty in having said outright, "I will not serve God." But it is an honesty which makes me shudder, for it betrays a heart hard as the nether millstone.

Again, you have said, "I will not serve God," and up to this time it is very possible that you have never been in the humor to repent of having said it, for the ways of sin are sweet to you, and your heart is fixed in its rebellion. You have never felt that conviction of sin which the Holy Spirit has worked in some of us; if you had felt it, you would soon have been shaken out of your "I will not." If God's power of divine grace, of which thousands of us bear witness that it is as real a power as that which guides the stars or wings the wind—if God's almighty grace should once get a hold of you, you would no longer say, "I do not believe this or that," for as tremblingly as any of those whom you now despise, you would cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" Up till now you have never felt that power, and therefore I cannot wonder that you do not acknowledge it, although the testimony of honest witnesses ought to have some weight with you. You are practically, intellectually, and avowedly not a Christian; you have never deceived yourself and others by making a profession which you do not honor, but you have gone on in your own chosen path, saying with more or less resolution, in answer to every call of the gospel, "I will not."

We said just now that the answer of the son to his father as recorded in our text was very plain; it was not, however, very genuine, or such as his father might have expected. His father said, "Son, go work today in my vineyard," and the son rudely said, "I will not, that is that," and without another word of apology or reason went his way. This is not quite as it should be, is it? Even so, my friend, you may have been too hasty and so have been unjust. Is it not very possible you have denied to God and to His gospel the respect which both really deserve? You have spoken very plainly, but at the same time very thoughtlessly, very harshly to the God who has deserved better things of you. Have you ever given the claims of the Lord Jesus a fair consideration? Have you not dismissed the gospel with a sneer quite unworthy of you? Have you not been afraid to look the matters between God and your soul squarely in the face? I believe it to be the case of hundreds here. I know it to be the case of thousands and tens of thousands in London. They have put their foot down, and they have said, "None of your religion for me! I have made up my mind and I will never change; I hate it and will not listen to it." Does no small voice within ever tell them that this is not fair to themselves or to God? Is the matter so easily to be decided? Suppose it should turn out that the religion of Jesus *is* true—what then? What will be the lot of those who despised Him? My hearer, the religion of Jesus is true, and I have proved its truth in my own case; do, I pray you, consider it, and do

not trifle away your immortal soul. Thus says the Lord, "Consider your ways."

It is now time for me to tell the openly ungodly what is his real state. You have been more than a little proud of your honesty; and looking down upon certain professors of religion you have said, "Ah, I make no such pretenses as they do, I am honest, I am!" friend, you cannot have a greater abhorrence of hypocrites than I have; if you can find a fair chance of laughing at them, pray do so. If by any means you can stick pins into their wind bags, and let the gas of their profession out, pray do so. I try to do a little of it in my way, you do the same! You and I are agreed in this, I hope, in heartily hating anything like sham and falsehood; but if you begin to hold your head up, and think yourself so very superior because you make no profession, I must take you down a little by reminding you that it is no credit to a thief that he makes no profession of being honest, and it is not thought to be exceedingly honorable to a man that he makes no profession of speaking the truth. For the fact is, that a man who does not profess to be honest is a professed thief, and he who does not claim to speak the truth is an acknowledged liar; thus in escaping one horn you are thrown upon another, you miss the rock but run upon the quicksand. You are a confessed and avowed neglecter of God, a professed despiser of the great salvation, an acknowledged disbeliever in the Christ of God. When our government at any time arrests persons suspected of Fenianism, [a member of a secret revolutionary organization in the United States and Ireland in the mid-19th Century, dedicated to the overthrow of British rule in Ireland] they have no difficulty about those gentlemen who glory in wearing the green uniform and flaunting the big feather. "Come along," says the constable, "you are the man, for you wear the uniform of a rebel." Even so when the angel of justice arrests the enemies of the Lord, he will have no difficulty in accusing and arresting you, for, laying his hand upon your shoulder, he will say, "You wear the uniform of an enemy of God; you plainly, and unblushingly, acknowledge that you do not fear God nor trust in His salvation." No witnesses need be called concerning you at the Last great day; you will stand up, not quite so bravely as you do today, for, when the heavens are on a blaze and the earth is rocking to and fro, and the great white cloud fills the field of vision, and the eyes of the great Judge shall burn like lamps of fire, you will put on a different manner and a different carriage from that which you maintain before a poor preacher of the gospel. Ah, my ungodly hearer, with such a case as yours there shall be no need to judge, for out of your own mouth shall you be condemned.

Yet I came not here to tell you only of your sins, but to help you to escape from them. It is necessary that this much should be said, but we now turn to something far more pleasant. I am in hopes this day that some of you will listen to that little word in the text, *"afterward."* He said, "I will not; but *afterward* he repented and went." It is a long lane which has no turning, let us trust that we have come to the turning now. There is space left you for repentance; though you may have been a drunkard, or a swearer, or unchaste, the die is not yet cast, a change is yet possible. May God grant that you may have reached the time when it shall be said of you, "Afterward he repented; he changed his mind; he believed

upon Jesus, and obeyed the Word of the Lord, and went." Perhaps the son in the parable thought a little more calmly about it. He said to himself, "I will consider the matter, second thoughts are often best. I growled at my good father and gave him a sharp answer, and I saw the tears standing in the good man's eyes. I am sorry I grieved him. The thought of grieving him makes me change my mind. I said 'No' to him," he said, "but I did not think about it. I forgot that if I go and work in my father's vineyard I shall be working for myself, for I am his eldest son, and all that he has will belong to me, so that I am very foolish to refuse to work to my own advantage. Ah, now I see my father had my advantage at heart, I will go as he bade me!" Look, he shoulders his tools, and away he marches to labor with all his might. He said, "I will not," but he repented and went, and it is admitted by all that he did the will of his father. Oh, I hope that many a man and woman now in this Agricultural Hall will this day cry, "I retract what I have said. I will go to my Father, and will say to Him, 'I will do Your bidding. I will not grieve Your love. I will not lose the opportunity of advancing my soul's best interest. I obey the gospel command."

I will suppose that I see one such before me, and I will speak to him. Perhaps he said, "I will not," because he really did not understand what religion was. How few, after all, know what the way of salvation is; though they go to church, and to chapel, they have not yet learned God's plan of pardoning sinners. Do you know the plan of salvation? Hear it and live by it. You have offended God; God must punish sin; it is a fixed law that sin must be punished; how then, can God have mercy upon you? Why, only in this way—Jesus Christ came from heaven and He suffered in the place of all who trust Him; suffered what they ought to have suffered, so that God is Just, and yet at the same time He is able to forgive the very chief of sinners through the merits of His dear Son. Your debts, if you are a believer in Him, Christ has paid on your behalf. If you do but come and rest upon Jesus and upon Jesus only, God cannot punish you for your sins, for He punished Jesus for them, and it would not be just of Him to punish Christ and then to punish you, to exact payment first from the Surety and afterwards from the debtor! My dear hearer, whoever you may be, whatever your past life may have been, if you will trust Christ, you shall be saved from all your sins in a moment, the whole of your past life shall be blotted out; there shall not remain in God's book so much as a single charge against your soul, for Christ, who died for you, shall take your guilt away and leave you without a blot before the face of God. Read the last verse of my text, and you will see that it was by believing that men entered into the kingdom of God of old, and it is still by believing that men are saved. "Behold the Lamb of God," said John the Baptist, and if you look to that bleeding Lamb, you shall live. Do you understand this? Is it not simple? Is it not suitable to you? Will you still refuse to obey it? Does not the Holy Spirit prompt you to relent? Do you not even now say, "Is it so simple? I will trust in Jesus—

'Guilty, but with heart relenting,
To the Savior's wounds I'll fly.'

I will come, by God's help, this morning, lest death should come before the sun sets. I will trust Christ to save me. Precious way of salvation! Why should I not be saved?"

It is possible too, that you may have said, "I will not," because you really thought there was no hope for you. Ah, my friend, let me assure you—and oh, how glad I am to be able to do it!—that there is hope for the vilest through the precious blood of Jesus. No man can have gone too far for the long arm of Christ to reach him. Christ delights to save the biggest sinners. He said to His apostles, "Preach the gospel to every creature, but begin"—where?—"begin at Jerusalem. There live the wretches who spat in My face; there live the cruel ones who drove the nails through My hands. Go and preach the gospel to them first. Tell them that I am able to save, not merely little sinners, but the very chief of sinners. Tell them to trust in Me and they shall live." Where are you, you despairing one? I know the devil will try to keep the sound of the gospel from your ears if he can, and therefore, I would "cry aloud and spare not." O you despairing sinners, there is no room for despair this side of the gates of hell. If you have gone through the foulest kennels of iniquity, no stain can stand out against the power of the cleansing blood.—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose ALL their guilty stains."

Oh, I trust, now that you know there is hope for you, you will say, "I will even come at once, and put my trust in Jesus."

While I would thus encourage you to repent of your neglect of God, let me invite you to come to Jesus, and press it upon you yet again. Ah, my dear friend, you will soon be dying, and though some wicked men, in their stupid insensibility, die very calmly, and as David said, "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men, but their strength is firm," yet, whether they perceive it or not, it is a dreadful thing to die with unpardoned sin hanging about you. What will your guilty soul do when it leaves the body? Think of it a minute. It is a matter worthy of your thought. Some of you, in all probability, will die this week. It is not probable that so many thousands of us will march through a whole week and be found alive at the other end of it. Well then, as we *may* some of us go soon, and all of us *must* go before long, let us look before us and think a bit. Imagine your soul unclothed of the body. You have left the body behind you and your disembodied spirit finds itself in a new world. Oh, it will be a glorious thing if that separated spirit shall see Jesus whom it has loved, and fly at once into His bosom, and drink forever of the crystal fountain of ever-flowing bliss—but it will be a horrible thing if, instead of it, your naked shivering spirit should wake up to find itself friendless, homeless, helpless, hopeless, tormented with remorse, afflicted with despair. What if it should have to cry out forever, "I knew my duty but I did it not, I knew the way of salvation but I would not run in it. I heard the gospel, but I shut my ears to it. I lived and at length left the world without Christ, and here I am, past hope, no repenting now, no believing now, no escaping now, for mercy and love no longer rule the hour"? Have pity on yourself, my hearer. I have pity on you. Oh, if my hand could pluck you from that flame, how cheerfully would I do it! Shall I pity you and will you not pity yourself? Oh, if my pleading could by God's grace persuade you to trust in Christ this morning, I would plead with you while my voice, and lungs, and heart, and life held out!

But oh, have pity on yourself! Pity that poor naked spirit which so soon will be quivering with utmost agony, a self-caused agony, an agony from which it will not escape, an agony of which it was warned, but which it chose to endure sooner than give up sin and yield to the scepter of Sovereign grace.

I would hope that you are saying, "I do now repent, and by God's grace I will go." If so, let me tell you there are a great many in heaven who once, like you, said, "I will not," but they afterwards repented and are now saved. I will give you one picture. Yonder, I see a company of men on horseback, and there is one, the proudest of them all, to whom they act as a guard; they are going to Damascus, that he may take Christians to prison and compel them to blaspheme. Saul of Tarsus is the name of that cruel, murderous persecutor. When Stephen was put to death, God said to this man, Saul, "Go, work in My vineyard," but Saul said plainly, "I will not." And to prove his enmity, he helped put Stephen to death. There he is riding in hot haste upon his evil errand, none more set and determined against the Lord. Yet my Lord Jesus can tame the lion, and even make a lamb of him. As Saul rides along, a bright light is seen, brighter than the sun at noonday; Saul falls from his horse, he lies trembling on the ground, and he hears a voice out of heaven, saying, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" Lifting up his eyes with astonishment, he sees that he had ignorantly been persecuting the Son of God. What a change that one discovery worked in him! That voice, "I am Jesus, whom you persecute," broke his hard heart and won him to the cause. You know how three days after that, that once proud and bigoted man was baptized upon a profession of the faith of Christ, whom he had just now persecuted! And if you want to see an earnest preacher, where can you find a better one than the apostle Paul, who, with heart on fire, writes again and again, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"? I hope there is a Saul here who is to be struck down this morning. Lord, strike him down! Eternal Spirit, strike him down *now!* You did not know perhaps, that you had been fighting God, but you thought the religion of Jesus to be a foolish dream. You did not know that you had insulted the dying Savior; *now* you know it, may your conscience be affected, and from this day forth may you serve the Lord.

I must leave this point when I have just said this. If there is one here who after a long refusal, at last relents, and is willing to become a servant of God by faith in Jesus Christ, let me tell him for his encouragement he shall not be one whit behind those who have been so long making a profession without being true to it, for the text says, "The tax collectors and harlots go into the kingdom," but what else? "Go into the kingdom" *before* those who made a profession of serving God, but who were not true to it. You great sinners shall have no back seats in heaven! There shall be no outer court for you. You great sinners shall have as much love as the best, as much joy as the brightest of saints. You shall be near to Christ; you shall sit with Him upon His throne; you shall wear the crown; your fingers shall touch the golden harps; you shall rejoice with the joy which is unspeakable and fall of glory. Will you come? Christ forgets your past ill manners, and bids you come *today*. "Come," He says, "unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Thirty years of sin shall be forgiven, and it shall not take thirty minutes to do it. Fifty, sixty, 70 years of iniquity shall all disappear as the morning's hoar-frost disappears before the sun! Come and trust my Master, hiding in His bleeding wounds—

"Raise your downcast eyes, and see
What throngs His throne surround!
These, though sinners once like thee,
Have full salvation found.
Yield not then to unbelief;
He says, 'There yet is room,'
Though of sinners you are chief,
Since Jesus calls you, come."

II. Bear with me a little time while I speak to the second character, THE DECEPTIVELY SUBMISSIVE, by far the most numerous everywhere in England, probably the most numerous in this assembly. Oh you, my own regular hearers, you who have heard my voice these 13 years—many of you are in this class. You have said to the great Father, "I go, sir!" but you have not gone. Let me sorrowfully sketch your portraits—you have regularly frequented a place of worship, and you would shudder to waste a single Sunday in an excursion, or in any form of Sabbath-breaking. Outwardly you have said, "I go, sir." When the hymn is given out, you stand up and sing, and yet you do not sing with the heart. When I say, "Let us pray!" you cover your faces, but you do not pray with real prayer. You utter a polite, respectful "I go, sir," but you do not go. You give a notional assent to the gospel. If I were to mention any doctrine, you would say, "Yes, that is true. I believe that." But your heart does not believe. You do not believe the gospel in the core of your nature, for if you did, it would have an effect upon you. A man may say, "I believe my house is on fire," but if he goes to bed and falls asleep, it does not look as if he believed it, for when a man's house is on fire he tries to escape. If some of you really believed that there is a hell, and that there is a heaven, as you believe other things, you would act very differently from what you do now. I must add that many of you say, "I go, sir," in a very solemn sense, for when we preach earnestly the tears run down your cheeks, and you go home to your bedrooms, and you pray a little, and everybody thinks that your concern of mind will end in conversion: but your goodness is "like the morning cloud and the early dew." You are like dunghills with snow upon them—while the snow lasts, you look white and fair, but when the snow melts the dunghill remains a dunghill still. Oh how many very impressible hearts are like that! You sin, and yet you come to a place of worship, and tremble under the Word; you transgress, and you weep and transgress again; you feel the power of the gospel after a fashion, and yet you revolt against it more and more. Ah, my friends, I can look some of you in the face and know that I am describing some of your cases to the letter! You have been telling lies to God all these years, by saying, "I go, sir," while you have not gone. You know that to be saved you must believe in Jesus, but you have not believed. You know that you must be born-again, but you are still strangers to the new birth. You are as religious as the seats you sit on, but no more; and you are as likely to get to heaven as those seats are, and not one whit more, for you are dead in sin, and death cannot enter heaven.

O my dear hearers, I lament that ever I should be called to say such a thing as this, and not be more affected by the fact; and, wonder of wonders, that you, some of you, know it to be true, and yet do not feel alarmed! It is the easiest thing in the world to impress some of you by a sermon, but, I fear, you never will get beyond mere transient impressions. Like the water when splashed, the wound soon heals. You know, and you know, and you know; and you feel, and feel, and feel again, and yet your sins, your self-righteousness, your carelessness, or your willful wickedness cause you, after having said, "I go, sir," to forget the promise and lie to God!

Now I spoke very honestly to the other class, and must be equally plain with you. You, too, *condemn yourselves.* There will be no need of witnesses against you. You have admitted that the gospel is true. You did not quarrel with the doctrine of future punishment or future glory. You attended a place of worship, and you said that God was good and worthy to be served; you confessed that you owed allegiance to Him, and ought to render it. You have even knelt down and in prayer you have said, "Lord, I deserve Your wrath." The great God has only to turn to some of your formal prayers to find quite enough evidence to secure your condemnation. Those morning prayers of yours, those evening prayers—hypocritical every one of them—will be more than sufficient to condemn you from your own mouth. Take heed! Take heed, I pray you, while you are yet in the land of hope!

All this while, as the 32nd verse reminds me, while you have remained unsaved, you have seen tax collectors and harlots saved by the very gospel which has had no power upon you. Do not you know it, young man? You, I mean, the son of a godly mother? You know that you are not saved, and yet you had a drunken workman in your father's employment, and he has been, these last few years, a sober Christian, he is saved, and you perhaps have taken to the habits which he has forsaken. You know that there have been picked off of the streets poor fallen women who have been brought to know Christ who are among the sweetest and fairest flowers in Christ's garden now, though they were once castaways; and yet some of you respectable people who never committed any outward vice in your lives, are still unconverted, and still saying to Christ, "I go, sir," but you have not gone. You are still without God! Without Christ! Lost, lost, lost! Yet fairer outward characters could scarcely be found. I could gladly weep for you! Oh, beware, beware of being like the apples of Sodom, which are green to look upon, but when crushed, crumble to ashes. Beware of being like John Bunyan's trees that were green outside, but inwardly rotten and only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinderbox. Oh, beware of saying as some of you do, "I go, sir," while you go not! I sometimes see sick people who quite alarm and distress me. I say to them, "My dear friend, you are dying; have you a hope?" There is no answer. "Do you know your lost state?" "Yes, sir." "Christ died for sinners." "Yes, sir." "Faith gives us of His divine grace." "Yes, sir." They say, "Yes, sir; yes, sir; yes, sir, and yes, sir; yes, sir." I sometimes wish before God they would contradict me, for if they would but have honesty enough to say, "I do not believe a word of it," I would know how to deal with them. Stubborn oaks are leveled by the gale, but

those who bend like the willow before every wind, what wind shall break them? O dear brothers and sisters, beware of being gospel hardened; or, what is the same thing, softened but for a season! Beware of being a promising *hearer* of the Word of God, and nothing more!

I do not mean to close my discourse by speaking to you in this apparently harsh way, which, harsh as it seems, is full of love to your soul. I have a good word for *you*, too. I trust that you, in this Agricultural Hall, will have a change worked in you by the Holy Spirit, for although these many years you have made false professions before God; there is yet room in His gospel feast for you. Did you notice the text? "The tax collectors and sinners enter into the kingdom of heaven *before you."* Then it is clear you may come after them, because it could not be said they entered *before* you, if you did not come after them. If the Lord shall break your heart, you will be willing to take the Lord Jesus for your All in All in just the same way as a drunk must, though you have not been a drunk. You will be willing to rest in the merit of Jesus just as a harlot must, though you have never been such. There is room for you, young people, though you have broken your vows, and quenched your convictions. Yes, and you gray-headed people may yet be brought, though you have lived so long in the outward means, and have never given your hearts to Jesus. Oh, come! This 24th day of March, 1867, may the Lord bring you! In this very place may the Lord lead you to say silently, "By the grace of God I will not be an open pretender any longer; I will give myself up to those dear hands that bled for me, and that dear heart that was pierced for me, and I will this day submit to Jesus' way."

The fact is, to close the subject, there is, my dear friends, the same gospel to be preached to one class of men as to every other class. I pray God the day may never come when we shall be found in our preaching talking about working classes, and middle classes, and upper classes. I know no difference between you, you are the same to me when I preach the gospel, whether you are kings and queens, or crossing sweepers—satin and cotton, broadcloth and fustian, are alike to the gospel. If you are peers of the realm, we trim not our gospel to suit you, and if you are the basest of thieves, we do not exclude you from the voice of mercy. The gospel comes to men as *sinners,* all equally fallen in Adam, equally lost and ruined by sin. I have not one gospel for Her Majesty the Queen, and another gospel for the beggar woman. No, there is but *one* way of salvation, but *one* foundation, but *one* propitiation, but *one* gospel! Look to the cross of Christ and live! High was the bronze serpent lifted, and all that Moses said was, "Look." Was a prince of the house of Judah bitten, he was told to look; without looking his lion standard of costly emblazonry could not be of any use to him. Was some poor wretch in the camp bitten, he must look, and the efficacy was the same for him as for the greatest of the host. Look! Look! Look to Jesus! Believe in the Son of God and live! One bronze serpent for all the camp; and one Christ for all ranks and conditions of men.

What a blessing would it be if we were all enabled to trust Christ this morning! My brothers and sisters, why not? He is worthy of the confidence of all. The Spirit of God is able to work faith in all. O poor sinner, look to Him! Dear hearers, I may never speak to some of you again, and I

would, therefore, be pressing with you. By the hour of death, by the solemnities of eternity, I do implore and beseech you accept the only remedy for sin which even God Himself will ever offer to the dying sons of men, the remedy of a bleeding Substitute suffering in your place, believed on and accepted in the heart. Cast yourself flat upon Christ. The way of salvation is just this—rest alone upon Christ! Depend wholly upon Him! The Negro slave was asked what he did, and he said, "I jest fall down on de rock, and he dat is down on de rock cannot fall no lower." Down on the rock, sinner! Fall down on the rock! The everlasting Rock of Ages! You cannot fall lower than that!

I will conclude with a well-known illustration. Your condition is like that of a child in a burning house, who, having escaped to the edge of the window, hung on by the windowsill. The flames were pouring out of the window underneath, and the poor lad would soon be burnt, or falling would be dashed to pieces; he therefore held on with the clutch of death. He did not dare to relax his grasp till a strong man stood underneath, and said, "Boy! Drop! Drop! I'll catch you!" Now it was no saving faith for the boy to believe that the man was strong—that was a good help towards faith—but he might have known that and yet have perished; it was faith when the boy let go and dropped down into his big friend's arms. There are you, sinner, clinging to your sins or to your good works. The Savior cries, "Drop! Drop into My arms!" It is not doing, it is *leaving off* doing; it is not *working*, it is *trusting* in that work which Jesus has already done. Trust! That is the word, simple, solid, hearty, earnest trust! Trust and it will not take an hour to save you; the moment you trust you are saved. You may have come in here as black as hell, but if you trust in Jesus you are wholly forgiven. In an instant, swifter than a flash of lightning the deed of grace is done! O may God the Spirit do it now, bringing you to trust, that you may be saved.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 103.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

EPHRAIM BEMOANING HIMSELF
NO. 743

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 31, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE AGRICULTURAL HALL, NEWINGTON.

"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: You have chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn You me, and I shall be turned, for You are the Lord my God." Jeremiah 31:18.

THE heathen described their fabled deity, Jove, as sitting far aloft, regardless of the common affairs of this lower world. Upon a few kings and princes he might turn an observant eye, but the most of men were creatures far too insignificant to affect the mind of Jove. Whether they lived or died was nothing to him; they fulfilled their destinies and passed away, while Jove remained serenely still, or nodded as his august will might be. Not such is Jehovah, the God of heaven and of earth. He compasses our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He ponders all his goings." He regards the cries of the afflicted. "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." "Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly." Though He is so great a God that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, yet He deigns to dwell with the man who is of a contrite and humble spirit. God has not left us as the ostrich leaves her young. Say not that we are left without a friend to care for us—our Maker has not gone away; He has not shut up the gates of heaven; He has not closed His ear from hearing, neither has He restrained His hand from helping us; still does He hear His Ephraims when they bemoan themselves, and send them the mercy for which they pine.

Let us conceive, as far as may be, of the nearness of God to every mourning soul, for it is marvelous and worthy of admiration. When Her Majesty, some months ago, heard of the desolation which had been caused by an accident in the pits, her tender heart hastened to the relief of the widows and the fatherless, but at the moment of the calamity she was not on the spot in person; she could not be in the pit to hear the groans and sustain the faith of the dying, no, she could not be in the cottage to mark the tears of the widow and to cheer her with heavenly promises; but our God is on the spot where calamity occurs, for in Him we live and move and have our being. He is the greatest of comforters, and He is also the most approachable. He is "a very present help in time of trouble." He needs no messengers to bear to Him the news of our grief or penitence, for He is not far from any of us. Mourner, your sigh is known to God as soon as you have heaved it, no, before your grief thus found a

vent He saw it struggling within you. Yes and the grief which you cannot express in words God can see and interpret. He knows the language of our grief, the meaning of our tears. Blessed is the ever-present God that He is upon the spot where the bemoaning of penitents are heard, and bends a gracious ear to the cry of His children.

This morning my first desire is that each of us may feel that God is here, and may be reached by us; that whatever our condition of mind may be the Lord is well aware of it, and that if there should be caused by this service even so much as the faintest ripple of a desire towards Him, He will note it, and if that desire should increase into a wave of prayer, it will not be lost upon Him. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."

I shall now, as I am strengthened by God, first ask your kind attention *to a sinner bemoaning himself;* secondly, I shall wish you *to remember God as hearing him;* and thirdly, our largest subject probably will be, *God fulfilling the desire of that bemoaning penitent, and turning him effectually from his sins.*

I. First, observe carefully, A SINNER BEMOANING HIMSELF.

Last Sunday we preached upon two sinners, but we had little or no bemoaning [#742—*A Sermon to Open Neglecters and Nominal Followers of Religion.*] One of them said, "I will not go," and the other said, "I go, sir," but went not. We are a stage farther this morning; we introduce to you one whose heart has been affected by divine grace, whose conscience has been awakened, whose soul has been quickened, and we find him, according to the expressive word of the text, "bemoaning himself." The very word is woeful to the ear—it reminds us of the mourning of doves; we cannot pronounce it without feeling that it reveals a depth of sorrow. It is a word which tells of pain, anguish, fear, restlessness, sad memories, terrible forebodings, and raging desires. Ephraim was *"bemoaning himself."*

Viewing the sorrow before us, we note that he who bemoaned himself was bowed down with a *peculiar grief*. He did not lament for his children with the bitter weeping of Rachel; he did not mourn over friends and kinsfolk withered under the blast of death; he was not as one crying out through pangs of bodily pain because a limb was crushed, or a bone was broken; he bemoaned himself, but not because he had lost his goods; not because the ship had foundered at sea, or the house was wrapped in flames, or his riches had taken to themselves wings and flown away. No, his sorrow was of another kind. He bemoaned himself with a more mysterious and bitterer grief. The cause of the sorrow lay within—he was "bemoaning *himself."* This is, I say, a peculiar sorrow—one which the most of men look down upon with scorn. I pray God, my hearers that you may not be strangers to it; for, unless you bemoan yourselves, you shall never make the angels merry, for their rejoicing is over "one sinner who *repents."* There is no weight of glory for those who have never mourned the weight of sin. If you have never bemoaned yourself, you have never enjoyed peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The sorrow of the

text is that of a soul visited by God the Holy Spirit—the inward grief of a man who has been convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It is bitter sorrow, but so blessed are its results, that I will call it a bitter sweet—it brings darkness with it, but it is the darkness of the last hour of the night which heralds the dawn of the day.

Godly sorrow is *well-founded sorrow.* I will try to describe its sources. When a sinner bemoans himself in this way: "Alas! Alas!" he says, "I have found out that all is true which I have oftentimes been told by God's ministers. I have indeed offended my Maker. I have grieved the God who gave me my being; I have made my best friend to be my enemy because of my sin; I have set myself in opposition to the King of kings. I cannot fight it out with Him, for He is too great for me: what shall I do? To where shall I fly? It is surely true and just that He should punish me; and woe is me, for I cannot bear His anger; if my ribs were iron and my flesh were granite, I would dissolve in the heat of His wrath. I can no more resist Him than flax can stand against fire, or stubble against the flame. Woe is me! I have awakened Omnipotence to be my enemy! I have set all heaven in array against me! I cannot resist, and I cannot escape—what then shall I do? Shall I promise that I will be better? Alas, my reformations cannot blot out my past sins, for my old offenses will still demand a punishment even if I commit no more! But worse and worse, I now discover that my nature is full of sin, and will rebel continually. Thorns and thistles will grow in the accursed soil of my heart, no matter what I do to pluck them up by the roots. I am not only thus an enemy to God by my actions, but by my very nature. Woe is me! Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then might I, accustomed to being evil, learn to do well! Alas! I am a traitor to my God, a stranger to peace and happiness, a slave to sin, in bondage to evil." To the mind in this state it is no wonder if the thought occurs, "Oh, that I had never been born! Would to God I had been created a dog or a toad sooner than have become a sinful man, for I see my end, my dreadful end! I shall march on from bad to worse, and when I shall die, the wrath of God will come upon me to the uttermost. Forever shall I be banished from all hope of happiness. I cannot endure the wrath to come. To where shall I fly, or what shall I do? If I try to pray, my lips refuse to express my heart's desires—no, I cannot tell what to desire or how to pray. Alas! Alas! I am undone indeed! I am lost! Lost! Lost! Would God that there was mercy for me." There is good ground in the sinner's state for all his bemoaning. The fears to which I have given utterance are all reasonable and well-grounded; fears so truly the offspring of a sound judgment and an enlightened conscience that if, dear hearer, you have never felt them; I pray that you may do so before you sun has set.

This sorrow is *humble sorrow.* Notice, it is not written, "I hear Ephraim excusing himself," or "flattering himself," or "making new resolutions," but, "I have heard him bemoaning himself." When God the Holy Spirit gives genuine conviction of sin to a man, how he changes in his own es-

teem! He finds that all his righteousnesses are just a bundle of filthy rags; he thought them to be clean, white vestments, fair as the robes of the redeemed in heaven, and he was proud to think of arraying himself in them; but when he unpacked them in the daylight he saw them to be full of holes, reduced to rags and tatters, and, what was worse, polluted with horrible filth: so he threw them all away and fell to bemoaning himself. An awakened conscience does not say, "I could not help it, it was my nature; I was led into it by my passions; I was tempted by my circumstances." No, it gives up all excuses because it sees their hollowness. "I sinned," says the man, "I knew it was sin; I chose it willfully; I might have avoided it, but I would not; I set darkness for light and light for darkness; I am a willful offender." Instead of laying a flattering unction to his soul, he sees sin to be exceedingly sinful and laments it. My hearers, am I describing some of you? I trust, before the Lord, some of you can see yourselves here, and if so, I have joyful news from the Lord for you, for broken hearts shall be bound up by the Lord Jesus Himself, and eternal life shall be given you if you rest in Him.

Please notice that this sorrow was *thoughtful* sorrow, for Ephraim reviews his past life—"You have chastised me." What came of it? Why, "I was chastised," and that was all. Are there not some of you in this Hall who might say, "Great God, You Yourself must deal with me, for none but Yourself can ever save me. I have been laid upon a bed of sickness, and I have recovered from it, and there was an end of the sickness, but I was none the better for it. I lost my wife, I buried my children, I have suffered hard blows, but that is all; all my afflictions have produced no good result. Lord, I have had sickness after sickness but I am rather worse than better, 'like a bull unaccustomed to the yoke, beaten but not subdued, struck but still obstinate.'" The more the untrained bull is goaded, the more it kicks, and it will not wear the yoke with patience. Have you not been like it? When you have heard a sermon, you have laughed at it; when your mother's tears have fallen for you, you have despised them; when your wife's prayers have gone up to heaven, you have turned them into ridicule; you have been chastised and chastised, but no good has followed it. Some of you have wearied the Lord with your iniquities, till He asks, "What shall I do with you?" Take heed, for patience endures not forever; the Lord will not always plow upon a rock; He will not always sow upon the thankless sand. "For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes often upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God; but that which bears thorns and briars is rejected, and is near unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." I trust that many of you are sensible that no outward providences, persuasions, or preaching will suffice to save you—you need *effectual grace* to convert your soul, or you will perish forever.

I beg you to notice the bemoaning of the text in one more respect, namely, that it was *hopeless and yet hopeful.* Ephraim says, "Lord, it is of no use to chastise me, for I only get worse; but do turn me, and I shall be

turned." I was staying one day at an inn in one of the valleys of Northern Italy, where the floor was dreadfully dirty. I had it in my mind to advise the landlady to scrub it, but when I perceived that it was made of mud, I reflected that the more she scrubbed the worse it would be. The man who knows his own heart soon perceives that his corrupt nature admits of no improvement; there must be a new nature implanted, or the man will be only "washed to deeper stains." "You must be born-again." Ours is not a case for mending, but for making new. The meaning of the prayer in my text is, "Lord, do not chastise me, but turn me. Do it Yourself and then it will be done. 'Turn me, and I shall be turned,' but if You do not do it I am past hope." O troubled soul, if the Lord shall put His hand to the work this morning, what a wonderful change will He work in you; but only His own right hand can do it. Pray, then, this prayer—

"'Turn me, and I shall be turned."
"No outward forms can make you clean,
Your leprosy lies deep within."

No resolving of yours can cleanse you any more than the Ethiopian can make himself white by resolving to be so; but the Holy Spirit can purify you with the blood of Jesus. He who gives life to the dead can give spiritual life to you. He can take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I invite you, therefore, to pray, "Turn me, O God, and I shall be turned." And I bid you exercise the appropriating grace of faith and say, "for You are the Lord my God." Are you made willing to take Jehovah to be your God today, my hearer? Are you willing to give up the world, its pleasures, and its gains? Are you willing to give up self, fashion, pomp, self-indulgence, and sin in every shape? If you are, then I beseech you wait not till you get home, but, standing or sitting where you now are, let Ephraim's bemoaning prayer be yours, "Turn me, Lord; convert me; make a new man of me; turn me, and I shall be turned; for You can do it so that it will be well done, thoroughly done, effectually done, permanently done, unhesitatingly done. Turn me, O Lord, and *I* shall be turned, even I. Though I have been set on mischief; though none beside could ever move my flinty soul; though I was so dogged and resolved that one might as well have tried to rule the winds or command the tempest as to curb my will; yet, Lord, You can do it." I see at this moment some of you dashing at full speed down the hill like wild horses, and none can restrain you. In vain we may call to you, in vain we throw fences across the road, you leap over every barrier, determined to be lost. But let Almighty grace interpose, let the Lord Himself appear; He can twist His hand in the neck which seemed clothed with thunder; He can throw back the maddened steed; He can thrust the bit of divine grace into its foaming mouth, and compel the once untamable being to bear the yoke of love. May such a feat of grace be performed in some sinner's heart this day!

II. I do not know where Ephraim was when he bemoaned himself, but I SEE THE LORD OBSERVING HIM.

I know not where some of you hide yourselves now that you are pricked in your conscience. Some retire to their bedrooms; some shut themselves in their closets. Many a countryman has wept behind the hedge, or climbed into a hayloft, or leaped into a saw pit to pray. It little matters where you seek the Lord. He will be sure to see you; and even if it is in the crowded street of Cheapside or Cornhill, if your soul is in prayer, all the din of noisy London cannot stop the prayer from reaching the ear of God. You know, mothers, how quick you are at night to hear your children if they are ill. If you had a nurse, she might slumber on; but as for you, with little Jane upstairs sick, if you fall asleep, the faintest noise wakes you; yet you are not one-half as wakeful as God is; for He neither slumbers nor sleeps. When your heart begins to say, "My God, my God, I would be reconciled; my Lord, I would be cleansed," the Lord is waiting to be gracious. Before you call, God hears you, for He is a God ready to pardon!

Observe that God heard all that Ephraim had to say. I do not know that anybody else cared to do so; and so, if you have not a Christian friend, although I am sorry for you, I would say never mind, God is enough for you without a friend. No one else might have understood Ephraim if they had heard him, but God knew all about him and He understood him well. If you cannot utter your prayer in good English, never mind, breathe it out anyway—God can understand it. Broken prayers are the best prayers. Do not suppose that you require fine words and elegant phrases in order to affect the Lord. Your tearful eyes shall be mightier than music or metaphor, and your heavy sighs shall be more eloquent than the polished period and lofty climax of the orator. Only prostrate your soul before God with humble heart and downcast eyes and your Father will accept you. What man among you can stand against his children's tears? When King Henry II in the ages gone by was provoked to take up arms against his ungrateful and rebellious son, he besieged him in one of the French towns, and the son, being near unto death, desired to see his father and confess his wrongdoing; but the stern old sire refused to look the rebel in the face. The young man, being sorely troubled in his conscience, said to those about him, "I am dying; take me from my bed, and let me lie in sackcloth and ashes, in token of my sorrow for my ingratitude to my father." Thus he died, and when the tidings came to the old man outside the walls that his boy had died in ashes, repentant for his rebellion, he threw himself upon the earth, like another David, and said, "Would God I had died for him." The thought of his boy's broken heart touched the heart of the father. If you, being evil, are overcome by your children's tears, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven find in your bemoaning and confession an argument for the display of His pardoning love through Christ Jesus our Lord?

This is the eloquence which God delights in, the broken heart, and the contrite spirit. He heard and He understood all that Ephraim said, and He was moved by it. Did you note that word, "I have *surely* heard Ephra-

im"? As if nothing was surer. If God should not hear the music of heaven, He would hear the prayers of penitents. If the booming of the storm and the roar of the tempest, when the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies; if the clapping of the thousand hands of the roaring sea when it rejoices in its strength should not be heard by the eternal ear—yet, *surely*, the bemoaning of a single sinner would be regarded. The crash of thunder is to the Lord no more than the sound of the falling of a dry leaf on a still summer's eve, but the cry of one of His children peals through heaven, and moves the infinite heart, so that swift on wings of love the God of mercy flies. Nor is it mere pity, God gives to us practical aid. He gave to Ephraim what Ephraim asked for. Our God is full of compassion. He is a terrible God when He has to deal with sin—thunderbolts are in his hands, and lightning flashes from His eyes of fire, "for our God is a consuming fire," but when He has to deal with *penitents* His name is love! He rides in a chariot of mercy and holds out a silver scepter of grace. O seeking souls, Jehovah will hear you, through the merits of His Son! Seek His face, and you shall not seek in vain!

III. Let us now turn to the third point and view THE LORD WORKING IN HIS EFFECTUAL GRACE.

Beloved friends, recollect that the only turning in the world that is saving and divine is the turning of the heart. As for a mere change of notions—the turning of the head—many mistake it for conversion, but it is quite another matter. "Oh, yes!" says a man, "I used to be an Arminian, now I have become a Calvinist;" or, "I used to be a churchman, and now I have joined the Baptists;" or, "I used to be a Papist, and I have become a Protestant." Well, and what difference will that make if you have not a new nature? A thief is a thief, whatever name he may bear—no change of name will make him honest. You may be quite as bad in one denomination as in another, for hypocrisy and formalism are found among all sorts of professors. If you take a raven and put it in a brass cage, or a silver cage, or a golden cage, it is still a raven; and so, if you join this church or that church, unless your *nature* is changed, you are an unsaved sinner. Let me add that, though it is a useful thing to have the outward conversation changed, yet that is not enough. It is a great blessing when a drunkard becomes a teetotaler; it is a great blessing when the thief becomes honest; it is a great blessing when any vice is given up, and the opposite virtue is carried out; but that is not the matter. "You must be born-again." All the changes that you can ever work in yourselves will not avail for your entering heaven. Go to St. Paul's cathedral and see the statues in white marble; they are not living men, and you cannot make them so. Wash them, clothe them, paint them, do what you will with them, they still cannot join in the songs or prayers of living men, because they are marble and not alive. Even so is it with you, unregenerate ones. You have no spiritual life in you—we would have you washed, we would have you moralized, for that is a good thing—even a corpse should be clean—but all the washing and the cleaning will not make you live; you

must have the divine Influence from on high. No turning is good for anything everlastingly except the renewing of the inward nature by a work of grace in the soul. How is this done? This is the work, this is the difficulty! I will show you God's mode of working as briefly as I can.

The Lord's way of turning a man in the main is much as follows, but the exact method varies in each case. If a man is going on in any one road, and you want to turn him, the first thing is to stop him. What would one of you think if tomorrow as you were walking to your work, you should suddenly see the earth open before you as though a volcano had split open the earth from its lowest depths? I guarantee you would go no further in that way; you would stand with hair on end, and gaze down in into the dread abyss, or fly back in alarm. This is exactly what happened to me when God turned *me*. I went on easy enough in my sins; I thought them pleasant, and that I should continue in them—till by God's grace I came to feel that hell was a real thing, and that I was on the brink of it. I saw clearly that if the brittle thread of my life were snapped, infinite misery would be my portion in the place where fiends forever bite their bonds of iron, unable to escape or to endure! Oh, how *a distinct sight of wrath to come,* stops a man! How he pauses when he perceives in his own soul that the wages of sin are death. A sight of the everlasting burnings makes him cry "STOP!" And though before he went on gaily dancing to destruction, he now waits awhile, puts his finger to his brow, takes counsel with his cooler judgment, and says to himself, "Now what shall I do?" When a man is awakened by the Holy Spirit to feel that hell is his just desert, it is no wonder that his mind is turned from the love of sin to a perfect horror of it. "Oh!" he says, "if hell is kindled by my sin, how can I love the sin which prepared such wrath for me?" The old naturalist, Ulysses Androvaldus, tells us that a dove is so afraid of a hawk that she will be frightened at the sight of one of its feathers. Whether it is so or not, I cannot tell; but this I do know, that when a man has had a thorough shaking over the jaws of hell, he will be so afraid of sin that even one of the feathers of it, any one sin, will alarm and send fear through his soul. This is a part of the way by which the Lord turns us when we are indeed turned.

Furthermore, the awakened conscience is led to *see the real nature of sin.* We have all seen bears in a pit, and lions in stone, and have seen them without alarm; but I can readily imagine that if a lion were suddenly to leap from my platform into the midst of this throng, you would regard it with a very different eye. A wild beast let loose among you would be a very different thing from what it is in a picture or a statue. Now, sin, as the preacher talks of it, is to most of you like a painted lion; but when a man feels it in his own soul as an evil full of mischief, it is a very different thing. We are like the man in the fable, who warmed a frozen viper in his bosom; but when it came to life he knew its poisonous nature, for he felt the venom in his veins. Men, before God quickens them, nurse the viper of sin in their bosom, and say, "Look at its pretty scales; how fair it

is to look upon! Do you suppose so harmless a creature could ever do me harm?" They put it in their bosom with much fondness; but when it bites them, and the hot poison runs through their veins, and conscience is thoroughly awake, then they loathe it and cast it from them, or rather would do so if they could; but as Laocoon, in the old story, tried in vain to tear the serpent's coils from his limbs, so is it with them until divine grace comes to their aid. At any rate, a true sight of sin soon turns a man most thoroughly from his former love of it.

There once lived a great religious impostor, of whom it is said—

"O'er his features hung
The veil, the silver veil which God had flung
In mercy there, to hide from mortal sight
His dazzling brow, till man could bear its light."

When that veil was at last lifted up, the foulest leprosy was seen. So sin comes to men covered with its silver veil, and it whispers with softest accents sweet as music, "Trust me, I cannot deceive you; I bring you richest joy; see how the cup sparkles, how the wine moves itself aright; how merry is the dance; how joyous is the chambering and the wantonness." But ah, when once that silver veil comes off, and sin's leprous brow is seen, then man, enlightened by his God, turns from it, crying, "Get you behind me, Satan." As Jehu said of Jezebel, "Throw her down," so do men abhor the accursed thing that by her witchcrafts could lead their souls to destruction! A sight of hell and a sense of sin are great means in the hands of God to turn the sinner from his ways.

The grand turning point I have not come to yet—it is a *sight of Christ on the cross.* If you ever, by the eyes of faith, see Jesus Christ dying for you, sin will never be sweet to you again. What was it that slew our blessed Lord? It was our sin—

"It were you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were;
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear."

When we discover that our iniquities put our dearest and best friend to death, we vow revenge against our iniquities, and from that day forth hate them with a perfect hatred. Let me illustrate this very simply. Here is a knife with a richly-carved ivory handle, a knife of excellent workmanship. Yonder woman, we will suppose, has had a dear child murdered by a cruel enemy. This knife is hers; she is pleased with it, and prizes it much. How can I make her throw that knife away? I can do it easily, for that is the knife with which her child was killed. Look at it; there is blood still upon the handle. She drops it as though it were a scorpion; she cannot bear it. "Put it away," she says, "it killed my child! Oh hateful thing!" Now, sin is such a thing—we play with it till we are told it was sin that killed the Lord Jesus, who died out of love to us—pure, disinterested love. Then we say, "Hateful thing, get you gone! How can I endure you?" Remember how Mark Anthony stirred up the Romans to a fury against

Caesar's murderers? Holding up the mantle of dead Caesar, he pointed to the tears and gashes in the garment—

"In this place ran Cassius' dagger through;
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed."

And thus he inflamed the multitude to such a pitch of fury that they snatched up the seats around them, and away they went to the houses of the conspirators to set them on a blaze. Ah, if my lips could speak as my heart bids them, I would cry, "See there the wounds of the Son of God; behold the crimson stains which mark His blessed body; mark the crown of thorns; gaze upon the pierced hands; weep over the nailed feet; see the deep gash which the lance made in His side! Sin did this cruel work, this bloody deed! Down with our sins; drag them to the cross; slay them at Calvary; let not one of them escape, for they are the murderers of Christ." This is the way in which the Lord turns the sinner, and he is turned indeed.

Further, one of the most blessed ways by which God makes the sinner turn is this—*He manifests His everlasting love to him.* You remember the fable of the traveler going along, wrapped up in his cloak, and the contest between the wind and the sun as to which would get his cloak from him? The wind blustered and blew with a cold driving rain but the traveler wrapped his cloak about him the more tightly, and went shivering on his journey; the wind could not tear away the garment. Then the genial sun burst forth, and shone full upon the traveler's face, it dried his garments and cheered him with its warmth; by-and-by the traveler loosened his cloak, and at last threw it off; the sun's kindness had won the day. Now, when God's law blusters about a sinner, it sometimes happens that he says, "I will go on in my sins," but when God's love comes, who can stand against it? "I have loved you with an everlasting love," says God to the sinner. "Is it so?" cries the renewed heart, "then, Lord, I cannot be Your enemy any longer." Oh, if some of you did but know that God has chosen you from before the foundation of the world! If you did but know that you are His darlings, His favorites, that He gave His own Son to die for you! Oh, if you did but know that your name, your worthless name, is written upon the hands of Christ—would you not love Him then? I pray that He may reveal that love to you today, and, if He does, you will sing—

"Your mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found!"

When this sense of divine love has done its work, new loves and new desires fill the soul, and the man is a new man. Some worldlings cannot make out why Christians abstain from certain pleasures. "Why," they say, "I am not going to deny myself of every pleasure!" Do not you know, my dear friends that it is no denial to us to go without sin? It is no denial to the sheep to live without licking blood, because the sheep would dread the sight of blood; it desires the sweet green grass, but does not care for carnage. So when God gives us new hearts and right spirits, we do not

find it a denial to renounce sin, our tastes are changed, our new loves and our new desires are not those of our former estate. There may be a gentleman here who has risen in the world: he was once a farmer's boy, but now he rides in his carriage. When he was a farmer's boy, he used to think what a grand thing it would be to be a king and swing on a gate and eat bacon all day long; but now I will be bound to say he does not want to swing on a gate, and has little relish for the rustic dainty of which he was once so fond; he has reached a different rank of society, and his tastes and habits are all different. So is it with the Christian; God makes a king of him, and how can he go back to play with beggars? God has put a heavenly nature into him, and he abhors groveling in the dust of sin. Dear friends, I would to God that you might know your standing in Christ—sons of God, heirs with Christ, joint heirs with Him; and when you do, it will turn you away from the base things of sin and you will be turned indeed.

Once more, and I shall not detain you. There is something which binds the Christian very fast to holiness and keeps him from sin, and that is the *prospect of yon bright world to which he is wending his way.* This week I had my faith much strengthened in visiting a sick woman. I would gladly change places with her. Glad enough would I be to lie upon that sick bed and die in her place, for though she has been long on the borders of the grave, and knows it, knows that each hour may probably be the last, her joy is so great, her bliss is so abundant, that you have only to speak with her and her joy overflows!

She told me, "I prayed that if God would spare me, He would give me one soul, and He has given me five converts while I have been on this bed." And I did not wonder at it, as I saw the five dear friends sitting in the room; I did not wonder at it—it was enough to make one a Christian to see her joy and her peace, and hear her talk so confidently about the time when she should see her Lord and be in His embrace forever. "Ah," says the devil to the Christian, "I will give you so much if you sin." Our reply is, "What could you give me compared with our inheritance? O fiend, you bring me *counterfeit* riches, but I can count down ten thousand times as much in real solid gold! You offer me your paste gems, but here are diamonds and pearls of the first water and of the rarest value! Away with you, you tempter! You know not how to tempt a Christian! For his gains are greater than anything you can give him." Surely, this would turn your hearts, my hearers, if you could but know and feel the glory of our inheritance. If you had a vision of the land of the hereafter, where the birds of Paradise forever sing, and the sun forever shines, and the day is never ended, surely sin would no longer enchant you. "We are on our journey home," say the host of the elect. The city which has foundations has turned their steps from sin, and they are turned indeed, so that they never can be turned back again.

Now I have done, but I do not like to send you away without making again the personal inquiry. Are you bemoaning yourself? Do you desire to

be turned? Would you have these gracious motives operating upon you? Then do not put it off, but this very moment breathe this silent prayer, "Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned." I have a great desire in my heart; I should like to tell you of it—it is that there should be more converted in this place than ever were converted at one time in any place since the world was, for never before was such an audience gathered to hear one man. Whether that desire shall be granted I do not know, but if we have faith enough for it, it may come, and it *will* come; why should it not? Oh, that some great sinners might be saved, for they always make the best saints! Oh, that the Lord might take some of the ringleaders in the devil's army and make them lieutenants in His service! None as brave for Christ as those who were brave for sin! You great sinners, may great mercy meet with you! Remember the way of salvation is this—Trust Jesus and you shall be saved: look to Him whom I have pictured just now bleeding, groaning, and dying on the cross. Look, look, and live! Only depend upon Him, only give your heart to Him, and rest in Him, and it is not possible that one should perish who comes to Jesus and puts his trust in Him!

Brothers and sisters, pray for us. If you, the members of this church, do not pray for me, I feel I shall have much to lay to your charge. Never was anyone called to so great a work as this. I have this morning 20,000 claims upon your prayers. I beseech you by the living God pray for me! It would be better for me that I were never born than to have this responsibility upon me if I have not your prayers. Who can tell?—the service of this morning may, when it is thought over and remembered by the hearers, bring forth fruit a hundredfold, and God shall have the glory. Do pray for me; and, sinner, unconverted sinner, do pray for *yourself,* and may God hear you for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 15:11-32.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

JESUS AT BETHESDA—OR, WAITING CHANGED FOR BELIEVING
NO. 744

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 7, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE AGRICULTURAL HALL, ISLINGTON.

"After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market, a pool which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool and troubled the water: whoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty-and-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He said unto him, Will you be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steps down before me. Jesus said unto him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath."
John 5:1-9.

THE scene of this miracle was Bethesda, a pool, according to the evangelist, adjoining the sheep market, or near the sheep gate—the place through which, I suppose, the cattle consumed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be driven; and the pool where, perhaps, the sheep intended for sale to the people in the temple were washed. So common was sickness in the days of the Savior, that the infirmities of men intruded upon the place which had been allotted to cattle; and the place where sheep had been washed became the spot where sick folk congregated in great multitudes, longing for a cure. We do not hear that anyone protested at the intrusion, or that public opinion was shocked. The needs of mankind must override all considerations of taste. A hospital must have preference over a sheep market. This day you have another case in point. If the physical infirmities of Jerusalem intruded into the sheep market, I shall ask no excuse if, on these Sundays, the spiritual sickness of London should demand that this spacious place, which has up to now been given up to the lowing of cattle and to the bleating of sheep, should be consecrated to the preaching of the gospel, to the manifestation of the healing virtue of Christ Jesus among the spiritually sick. This day there is by the sheep market a pool, and impotent folk are here in exceeding great multitudes.

We might never have heard of Bethesda, if an august Visitor had not condescended to honor it with His presence—Jesus, the Son of God, walked in the five porches by the pool. It was the place where we might expect to meet Him, for where should the Great Physician be found if not in the place where the sick are gathered? Here was work for Jesus' heal-

ing hand and restoring word. It was but natural that the Son of Man, who "came to seek and to save that which was lost," should make His way to the sick by the side of the pool. That gracious visit is Bethesda's glory. This has lifted up the name of this pool out of the common rank of the springs and waters of the earth. O that King Jesus might come into *this* place this morning! This would be the glory of this hall for which it should be famous in eternity. If Jesus would be here to heal; the remarkable size of this congregation would cease to be a wonder, and the renown of Jesus, and His saving love would eclipse all else, as the sun puts out the stars. My brothers and sisters, Jesus will be here, for there are those of you who know Him, and have power with Him, who have been asking for His presence. The Lord's favored people, by prevailing cries and tears, have won from Him His consent to be in our midst this day, and He is walking amid this throng as ready to heal and as mighty to save as in the days of His flesh. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," is an assurance which comforts the preacher's heart this morning. A present Savior—present in the power of the Holy Spirit—shall make this day to be remembered by many who shall be made whole.

I ask the earnest attention of all, and I entreat of believers their fervent assisting prayers while I first bid you observe *the sick man;* secondly, direct your attentive eye *to the Great Physician;* and, thirdly, *make an application of the whole narrative to the present case.*

I. In order to observe THE PATIENT, I shall ask you to go with me to the pool with the five porches, around which the sick are lying. Walk tenderly among the groups of lame and blind! No, do not close your eyes. It will do you good to see the sorrowful sight, to mark what sin has done and to what sorrows our father Adam has made us heirs.

Why are they all here? They are here because sometimes the waters bubble up with a healing virtue. Whether visibly stirred by an angel or not it is not necessary for us to discuss; but it was generally believed that an angel descended and touched the water—this rumor attracted the sick from all quarters. As soon as the stir was seen in the waters, the whole mass probably leaped into the pool—those who could not leap themselves were pushed in by their attendants. Alas! How small the result! Many were disappointed; only one was rewarded for the leap; whoever *first* stepped in was healed, but only the first. For the poor and meager chance of winning this cure the sick folk lingered in Bethesda's arches year after year. The impotent man in the narrative had most likely spent the better part of his 38 years in waiting at this famous pool, buoyed up by the slender hope that he might one day be first of the throng. On the Sunday mentioned in the text, the angel had not come to him, but something better had come, for Jesus Christ, the angel's Master was there!

Note concerning this man that *he was fully aware of his sickness.* He did not dispute the failure of his health—he was an impotent man; he felt it and he admitted it. He was not like some present this morning who are lost by nature, but who do not know it, or will not confess it. He was conscious that he needed heavenly help, and his waiting at the pool

showed it. Are there not many in this assembly who are equally convinced on this point? You have for a long time felt that you are a sinner, and have known that unless grace shall save you, you can never be saved. You are no atheist, no denier of the gospel; on the contrary, you firmly believe the Bible, and heartily wish that you had a saving part in Christ Jesus; but for the present you have advanced no further than to feel that you are sick, to desire to be healed, and to admit that the care must come from above. So far, so good, but it is not good to stop here.

The impotent man, thus desiring to be healed, *waited by the pool,* expecting some sign and wonder. He hoped that an angel would suddenly burst open the golden gates and touch the waters which were now calm and stagnant, and that he then might be healed. This, too, my dear hearers, is the thought of many of those who feel their sins and who desire salvation. They accept that unscriptural and dangerous advice given to them by a certain class of ministers; they wait at the pool of Bethesda; they persevere in the formal use of means and ordinances, and continue in unbelief, expecting some great thing. They abide in a continued refusal to obey the gospel, and yet expect that all of a sudden they will experience some strange emotions, feelings, or remarkable impressions; they hope to see a vision, or hear a supernatural voice, or be alarmed with deliriums of horror. Now, dear friends, we will not deny that a few persons have been saved by very singular interpositions of God's hand, in a manner altogether out of the ordinary modes of divine procedure. We would be very foolish if we were for instance to dispute the truth of such a conversion as that of Colonel Gardiner, who, the very night when he made an appointment to commit sin, was stopped and converted by a vision of Christ upon the cross, which, at any rate, he thought he saw, and by hearing or imagining that he heard the voice of the Savior tenderly pleading with him. It would be idle to dispute that such cases have occurred, do occur, and may occur again. I must, however, beg unconverted people not to look for such interpositions in their own cases. When the Lord bids you believe in Jesus, what right have you to demand signs and wonders instead? Jesus Himself is the greatest of all wonders. My dear hearer, for you to wait for remarkable experiences is as futile as was the waiting of the multitude who lingered at Bethesda waiting for the long-expected angel, when He who could heal them stood already in their midst, neglected and despised by them. What a piteous spectacle, to see them gazing into the clouds when the physician who could heal them was present; but they offered Him no petitions, and sought no mercy at His hands.

In dealing with the method of waiting to see or to feel some great thing, we remark, that *it is not the way which God has bid His servants preach.* I challenge the whole world to find any gospel of God in which an unconverted man is told to abide in unbelief. Where is the sinner told to wait upon God in the use of ordinances, so that he may be saved? The gospel of our salvation is this—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." When our Lord gave His commission to His disciples, He said, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And what was that gospel? Tell them to wait in their unbelief in the use

of means and ordinances till they *see* some great thing? Tell them to be diligent in prayer, and read the Word of God, until they feel better? Not an atom of it. Thus says the Lord, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who believes not shall be damned." This was the gospel and the only gospel which Jesus Christ ever bade His ministers preach, and they who say, wait for feelings, wait for impressions, wait for wonders, preach another gospel which is not another! The lifting up of Christ on the cross is the saving work of the gospel ministry and in the cross of Jesus lies the hope of men! "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," is God's gospel. "Wait at the pool," is man's gospel, and has destroyed its thousands!

This ungospel-like gospel of waiting is *immensely popular.* I should not wonder if well near half of you are satisfied with it. O my hearers, you do not refuse to fill the seats in our places of worship; you are seldom absent when the doors are open, but there you sit in confirmed unbelief, waiting for windows to be made in heaven, and neglecting the gospel of your salvation! The great command of God, "Believe and live," has no response from you but a deaf ear, and a stony heart, while you quiet your consciences with outward religious observances. If God had said, "Sit in those seats and wait," I would be bold to urge it upon you with tears; but God has not said so; He has said, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him." He has not said, "Wait," but He Has said, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near." "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." I find Jesus saying nothing to sinners about waiting, but very much about coming. "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." "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."

Why is this "signs and wonders" way so popular? It is because *it administers an opium-like substance to the conscience.* When the minister preaches with power, and the hearer's heart is touched, the devil says, "Wait for a more convenient season." Thus the arch enemy pours his deadly drug into the soul, and the sinner instead of trusting in Jesus on the spot, or falling on bended knees with tearful eyes, crying for mercy, flatters himself because he is in the use of the means—which use of means is well enough as far as it goes, but which is bad as bad can be when it comes into the place of Christ crucified. A child ought to hear its parent's command, but what if the child puts hearing into the place of obeying? God forbid that I should glory in your listening to the gospel, if you are hearers only—my glory is in the cross; and unless you look to the cross, it were better for you that you had never been born.

I ask the candid attention of everyone who has thus been waiting, while I mention one or two points. My dear friend, is not this waiting *a very hopeless business* after all? Out of those who waited at Bethesda, how very few were ever healed! He who stepped down first into the pool was cured, but all the rest came up from the pool just as they went in.

Ah, my hearers, I tremble for some of you—you chapel-goers and church-goers, who have for years been waiting, how few of you get saved! Thousands of you die in your sins, waiting in wicked unbelief. A few are snatched like brands from the burning, but the most of those who are hardened waiters, wait, and wait, till they die in their sins. I solemnly warn you that, pleasing to the flesh as waiting in unbelief may be, it is not one which any reasonable man would long persevere in. For, my friend, are not you in your own person an instance of its hopelessness? You have been waiting for years; you can scarcely remember when you first went to a place of worship; your mother carried you there in her arms, and you have been nurtured under the shadow of the sanctuary, like the swallows that build their nests under God's altars, and what has your unbelieving waiting done for you? Has it made you a Christian? No; you are still without God, without Christ, without hope!

I shall put it to you in God's name—what rights have you to expect that if you wait another 30 years you will be at all different from what you are now? Are not the probabilities most strong that at 60 you will be as graceless as you are at thirty? Let me say it, and I dare say it without egotism, some of you have listened to the gospel preached to you in no mincing manner. My dear hearers, I have been as plain with you as I know how to be; I have never shunned declaring the whole counsel of God, nor even to pick out an individual case and deal with it closely. Short of actually mentioning people's names, I have hardly stopped, but I have sought to commend the gospel to the conscience of every man as in the sight of God. Remember the warnings you had in Exeter Hall—some of you remember how you broke down in the Surrey Gardens [See first six volumes *The New Park Street Pulpit*]. Others remember the invitations which have already come to you in this very Hall; and if all these have failed, what more is to be done in the way of hearing and waiting? Many of you have listened to other preachers, equally earnest, equally tender, perhaps more so; now, if all these have had no effect upon you, if waiting at the pool has done nothing for you, is it not a forlorn and helpless mode of procedure? Is it not time that something better were tried than merely waiting for the troubling of the water? Is it not time that you remembered that Jesus Christ is ready to save you NOW, and that if you now trust in Him, you shall this very day have everlasting life?

There lies our poor friend, still waiting at the water's edge. I do not blame *him* for waiting, for Jesus had not been there before, and it was right for him to seize even the most slender chance of a cure; but it was sad that Jesus should have been so slighted—here He went, threading His way among the blind, and the halt, and the lame, and looking benignly upon them all, but none looking up to Him. Now, in other places, soon as Jesus made His appearance, they brought the sick in their beds and laid them at His feet, and as He went along He healed them all, scattering mercies with both His hands. Blindness had come over these people at the pool; there they were, and there was Christ, who could heal them, but not a single one of them sought Him! Their eyes were fixed on the water, expecting it to be troubled; they were so taken up with their own chosen way that the true *way* was neglected. No mercies were dis-

tributed, for none were sought. Ah, my friends, my sorrowful question is, *shall it be so this morning?* The living Christ is still among us in the energy of His eternal Spirit. Will you be looking to your good works? Will you be trusting to your church attendance and your chapel-goings? Will you rely upon expected emotions, impressions, and fits of terror, and let Christ, who is able to save to the uttermost, have no glimpse of faith from any eyes, no prayer of desire from any heart? If it shall be so, it is heart-breaking to think of it; men, with an Almighty Physician in their house, dying while they are amused with a hopeless quackery of their own inventing! O poor souls, shall Bethesda be repeated here this morning, and Jesus Christ, the present Savior, be again neglected? If a king should give to one of his subjects a ring, and say to him, "When you are in distress or disgrace, simply send me that ring, and I will do all for you that is necessary"—if that man should willfully refuse to send it, but purchase presents, or go about to do some singular feats of valor in order to win his monarch's favor, you would say, "What a fool he is; here is a simple way, but he will not avail himself of it, he wastes his wits in inventing new devices, and toils away his life in following out plans that must end in disappointment." Is not this the case with all those who refuse to trust Christ? The Lord has assured them that if they trust Jesus, they shall be saved; but they go about after ten thousand imaginings, and let their God, their Savior, go!

Meanwhile the sick man, so often disappointed, was *growing into deep despair.* Moreover he was becoming *old;* for 38 years is a long time out of a man's life. He felt that he should soon die. The brittle thread was nearly snapped, and so as the days and nights wearily wore on, though he waited, it became heavy work to wait. My friend, is not this your case? Life is wearing away with you. Are there not gray hairs here and there? You have waited all this while in vain, and I warn you that you have *sinfully* waited. You have seen others saved. Your child is saved, your wife is converted, but you are not; you are waiting, and will wait, I fear, till the tune of, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes," and the dirt shall rattle on your coffin lid, and your soul shall be in hell. Do not, I pray you, play with time any longer. Say not, "There is time enough," for the wise man knows that time enough is little enough. Be not like the foolish drunkard who, staggering home one night, saw his candle lit for him. "Two candles." he said, for his drunkenness made him see double, "I will blow out one," and as he blew it out, in a moment he was in the dark. Many a man sees double through the drunkenness of sin—he thinks that he has one life to sow his wild oats in, and then the last part of life in which to turn to God; so, like a fool, he blows out the only candle that he has, and in the dark he will have to lie down forever. Hurry, traveler, you have but one sun, and when that sets, you will never reach your home. God help you to make haste now!

II. Let us look at THE PHYSICIAN Himself.

As we have already seen, our Lord on this occasion walked, forgotten and neglected, through that throng of impotent folk, no one crying, "Son of David, have mercy upon me!" No struggling woman seeking to touch the hem of His garment that she might be made whole! All were desirous

of being healed, but, either no one knew or no one trusted Him. What a strange, soul-sickening sight it was, for Jesus was quite able and willing to heal, and to do it all without fee or reward, and yet none sought Him. Is this scene to be repeated this morning? Jesus Christ is able to save you, my hearers. There is no heart so hard that He cannot soften it; there is no man among you who is so lost that Jesus cannot save him. Blessed be my dear Master, no case ever did defeat Him; His mighty power reaches beyond the uttermost of all the depths of human sin and folly. If there is a harlot here, Christ can cleanse her. If there is a drunkard or a thief here, the blood of Jesus can make him white as snow. If you have any desire towards Him, you have not gone beyond the reach of His pierced hands. If you are not saved, it is certainly not for lack of power in the Savior. Moreover, your poverty is no hindrance, for my Master asks nothing from you—the poorer the wretch, the more welcome to Christ. My Master is no covetous priest who demands pay for what He does—He forgives us freely; He wants none of your merits, nothing whatever from you; come as you are to Him, for He is willing to receive you as you are. But here is my sorrow and complaint, this blessed *Lord Jesus, though present to heal, receives no attention from the most of men.* They are looking another way, and have no eyes for Him. *Yet Jesus was not angry.* I do not find that He upbraided one of those who lay in the porches, or that He even thought a hard thought of them; but I am sure that He pitied them, and said in His heart, "Alas, poor souls, that they should not know when mercy is so near!" My Master is not wrathful with you who forget Him and neglect Him, but He pities you from His heart. I am but His poor servant, but I pity from my inmost heart those of you who live without Christ. I would gladly weep for you who are trying other ways of salvation, for they will all end in disappointment, and if continued in, will prove to be your eternal destruction.

Observe very carefully what the Savior did. Looking around among the whole company, *He made an election.* He had a right to make what choice He pleased, and He exercised that sovereign prerogative. The Lord is not bound to give His mercy to everyone, or to anyone. He has freely proclaimed it to you all; but as you reject it, He has now a double right to bless His chosen ones by making them willing in the day of His power. The Savior selected that man out of the great multitude, we know not why, but certainly for a reason founded in grace. If we might venture to give a reason for His choice, it may be that He selected him because his was the worst case, and he had waited the longest of all. This man's case was in everybody's mouth. They said, "This man has been there 38 years." Our Lord acted according to His own eternal purpose, doing as He pleased with His own; He fixed the eyes of His electing love upon that one man, and, going up to him, He gazed upon him. He knew all his history; He knew that he had been a long time in that case, and therefore He pitied him much. He thought of those dreary months and years of painful disappointment which the impotent man had suffered, and the tears were in the Master's eyes; He looked and looked again at that man, and His heart yearned towards him. Now, I know not whom Christ intends to save this morning by His effectual grace. I am bound to give the general

call, it is all that I can do, and I know not where the Lord will give the effectual Call which alone can make the Word saving. I should not wonder if He should call some of you who have been waiting long. I will bless His name if He does. I should not marvel if electing love should pitch upon the chief of sinners this day; if Jesus should look on some of you who never looked on Him, His look shall make *you* look, and His pity shall make *you* have pity upon yourselves, and His irresistible grace shall make you come to Him that you may be saved. Jesus performed an act of sovereign distinguishing grace. I pray you do not kick at this doctrine! If you do, I cannot help it, for it is true. I have preached the gospel to every one of you as freely as man can do it, and surely you who reject it ought not to quarrel with God for bestowing on others that which you do not care to receive. If you desire His mercy, He will not deny it to you; if you seek Him He will be found of you; but if you will not seek mercy, rail not at the Lord if He bestows it upon others.

Jesus, having looked upon this man with a special eye of regard, said to Him, "Will you be made whole?" I have already hinted that this was not said because Christ wanted information, but because He wished *to awaken the man's attention.* On account of its being the Sabbath, the man was not thinking of being cured, for to the Jew it seemed a most unlikely thing that cures should be worked on a Sabbath day. Jesus, therefore, brought his thoughts back to the matter in hand; for, mark you, the work of grace is a work upon a *conscious mind*, not upon senseless matter. Though Puseyites and Romanists pretend to regenerate unconscious children by sprinkling their faces with water, Jesus never attempted such a thing—Jesus saves men who have the use of their senses—and His salvation is a work upon a quickened intellect and awakened affections. Jesus brought back the wandering mind with the question, "Will you be made whole?" "Indeed," the man might have said, "indeed, I desire it above all things—I long for it—I pant for it." Now, my dear hearer, I will ask the same question of you. "Will you be made whole? Do you desire to be saved? Do you know what being saved is?" "Oh," you say, "it is escaping from hell." No, no, no! That is the *result* of being saved, but being saved is a different thing. Do you want to be saved from the power of sin? Do you desire to be saved from being covetous, worldly-minded, bad-tempered, unjust, ungodly, domineering, drunken, or profane? Are you willing to give up the sin that is dearest to you? "No," says one, "I cannot honestly say I desire all that." Then you are not the man I am seeking this morning! But is there one here who says, "Yes, I long to be rid of sin, root and branch; I desire, by God's grace, this very day to become a Christian, and to be saved from sin." Well, then, as you are already in a state of thoughtfulness, let us go a step further, and observe what the Savior did. *He gave the word of command,* saying, "Rise! Take up your bed and walk." The power by which the man arose was not in him, but in Jesus; it was not the mere sound of the words which made him rise, but it was the divine power which went with it. I believe that Jesus still speaks through His ministers; I trust that He speaks through *me* at this moment, when in His name I say to you who have been waiting at the pool, wait no longer, but this moment believe in Jesus Christ! Trust Him

now! I know that my words will not make you do it, but if the Holy Spirit works through the words, you will believe. Trust Christ now, poor sinner. Believe that He is able to save you; believe it now! Rely upon Him to save you this moment; repose upon Him now! If you are enabled to believe, the power will come from Him, not from you; and your salvation will be genuine, not by the sound of the word, but by the secret power of the Holy Spirit which goes with that word!

I pray you observe that although nothing is said about faith in the text, yet *the man must have had faith.* Suppose you had been unable to move hand or foot for 38 years, and someone said at your bedside, "Rise!" You would not think of trying to rise, you would know it to be impossible; you must have faith in the person who uttered the word, or else you would not make the attempt. I think I see the poor man—there he is, a heap, a writhing bundle of tortured nerves and powerless muscles; yet Jesus says, "Rise!" and up he rises in a moment. "Take up your bed," says the Master, and the bed is carried. Here was the man's faith. The man was a Jew, and he knew that, according to the Pharisees, it would be a very wicked thing for him to roll up his mattress and carry it on the Sabbath; but because Jesus told him, he asked no questions, but doubled up his pallet, and walked! He did what he was told to do because he believed in Him who spoke. Have *you* such faith in Jesus, poor sinner? Do you believe that Christ can save you? If you do, then I say to you in His name, trust Him! Trust Him now! If you trust Jesus, you shall be saved this morning—saved on the spot, and saved forever!

Observe, beloved friends, that *the cure which Christ worked was perfect.* The man could carry his bed; the restoration was proved to a demonstration, the cure was manifest; all could see it. Moreover, the cure was *immediate*. He was not told to take a lump of figs, and put it on the sore, and wait; he was not carried home by his friends, and laid up for a month or two, and gradually nursed into vital energy. Oh, no! He was cured then and there. Half our professing Christians imagine that divine regeneration cannot take place in a moment; and, therefore, they say to poor sinners, "Go and lie at Bethesda's pool; wait in the use of ordinances; humble yourself; seek deeper repentance." Beloved, away with such teaching! The cross! The cross! The cross! THERE hangs a sinner's hope! You must not rely on what you can do, or on what angels can do, or on visions and dreams, or on feelings and strange emotions, and horrible deliriums, but you must rest in the blood of my Master and my God, once slain for sinners. There is life in a look at the Crucified One, but there is life nowhere else. I come to the same point, then, upon the second head as the first. Thus says the Lord, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth."

III. Thirdly, we have to APPLY THE INSTANCE IN THE TEXT TO THE PRESENT OCCASION.

I hope, believers, your hearts are going up in prayer this morning. What a scene is before us! If someone had told us that this mass of people [Approximately 20,000 souls.] would have gathered to listen to the gospel, are there not hundreds who would have doubted it? Mark this, we have had nothing novel to attract this multitude—nothing by way of gorgeous cer-

emony; there is not even the swell of the organ—I declined its pealing notes lest we should seem to depend in the slightest degree from a thread even to a shoe lace, upon anything but the preaching of the gospel! The preaching of the cross is enough to draw the people, and enough to save the people, and if we take to anything else, we lose our power and shear away the locks which make us strong. The application of the text, this morning, is just this—*Why should we not, on this very spot, have instantaneous cures of sick souls?* Why should there not be scores, hundreds, thousands, who shall this morning, hear the gracious words, "Arise, take up your bed and walk"? I believe it is possible. I hope it will be done. Let me talk with you who doubt this matter. You still think that you must wait—you have had a sufficient spell of waiting, and you are getting tolerably weary, but still you stick to the old plan; hopeless as it is, you still catch at it as drowning men do at straws. But I want to show you that this is all wrong. Regeneration is an instantaneous work, and justification an instantaneous gift. *Man fell in a moment.* When Eve plucked the fruit, and Adam ate it, it did not require six months to bring them into a state of condemnation. It did not require several years of continued sin to cast them out of paradise. Their eyes were opened by the forbidden fruit; they saw that they were naked, and they hid themselves from God. Surely, surely, Christ is not to be longer about His work than the devil was about his. Shall the devil destroy us in a moment, and Jesus be unable to save us in a moment! Ah, glory be to God, He has power to deliver far more to save than any which Satan uses for man's destruction.

Look at the *biblical illustrations* of what salvation is. I will only mention three. Noah built the ark; that was a type of salvation; now, when was Noah saved? Christ has built the ark for us. We have nothing to do with building it; but when was Noah saved? Does anyone say, "He was safe after he had been in the ark a month and had arranged all the things and looked out on the deluge and felt his danger." No! The moment Noah went through the door and the Lord shut him in, Noah was safe. When he had been in the ark a second he was as secure as when he had been there a month. Take the case of the Passover. When were the Jews safe from the destroying angel who went through the land of Egypt? Were they safe after the blood which was sprinkled on the door had been looked upon and considered for a week or two? Oh, no! Beloved, the moment the blood was sprinkled, the house was secured; and the moment a sinner believes and trusts in the crucified Son of God he is pardoned at once, he receives salvation in full through Christ's blood. One more instance, the bronze serpent. When the bronze serpent was lifted up, what were the wounded to do? Were they told to wait till the bronze serpent was pushed into their faces, or until the venom of the serpent showed certain symptoms in their flesh? No, they were commanded to look. They did look. Were they healed in six months time? I read not so, but as soon as their eyes met the serpent of brass, the cure was worked—and as soon as your eyes meet Christ, poor trembler, you are saved! Though yesterday you were deep in your cups, and up to your neck in sin, yet if this morning you look to my once slain but now exalted Master, you shall find eternal life!

Again take *biblical instances.* Did the dying thief wait at the pool of the ordinances? You know how soon his believing prayer was heard, and Jesus said, "Today you shall be with Me in paradise." The 3,000 at Pentecost, did they wait for some great thing? No, they believed, and were baptized. Look at the jailer of Philippi. It was the dead of the night, the prison was shaken, and the jailer was alarmed, and said, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?" Did Paul say, "Well, you must use the means and look for a blessing upon the ordinances"? No! He said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house," and that very night he baptized him. Paul did not take the time about it that some think so exceedingly necessary. He believed as I do, that there is life in a *look* at Jesus; he bade men look, and looking they lived.

Possibly you will see this still more clearly if I remind you that *the work of salvation is all done.* There is nothing for a sinner to do in order to be saved; it is all done for him. You need washing. The bath does not need filling. "There is a fountain filled with blood." You need clothing. You have not to make the garment, the robe is ready. The garment of Christ's righteousness is woven from the top throughout; all that is needed is to have it put on. If some work remained for you to do it might be a lengthened process, but all the doing is accomplished by Christ. Salvation is not of works, but of grace, and to accept what Christ presents you is not a work of time.

Once more, let me say to you that *regeneration itself cannot be a work of a long time,* because, even where it seems to be most gradual, when looked at closely, it turns out in its essence to be the work of a moment. There is a dead man: now, if that man is raised from the dead there must be an instant in which he was dead, and another instant in which he was alive. The actual quickening must be the work of a moment. I grant you that at the first the life may be very feeble, but there must be a time when it begins. There must be a line—we cannot always see it ourselves, but God sees it—there must be a line between life and death. A man cannot be somewhere between dead and alive; he either is alive or he is dead; and so you are either dead in sin or alive unto God, and quickening cannot involve a long period of time.

Finally, my hearers, *for God to say, "I forgive you," takes neither a century nor a year.* The judge pronounces the sentence, and the criminal is acquitted. If God shall say to you this morning, "I absolve you," you are absolved, and you may go in peace. I must bear faithful witness as to my own case. I never found mercy by waiting. I never obtained a gleam of hope by depending upon ordinances. I found salvation by *believing.* I heard a simple minister of the gospel say, "Look and live! Look to Jesus! He bleeds in the garden, He dies on the cross! Trust Him! Trust to what He suffered instead of you; and if you trust Him, you shall be saved." The Lord knows I had *heard* that gospel many times before, but I had not obeyed it. It came this time, however, with divine power to my soul, and I did look, and the moment I looked to Christ, I lost my burden. "But," says one, "how do you know?" Did you ever carry a burden yourself? "Oh, yes," you say. Did you know when it was off? How did you know? "Oh," you say, "I felt so different. I knew when my burden was on, and,

consequently, I knew when it was off." It was so in my case, too. I only wish some of you felt the burden of sin as I felt it when I was waiting at the pool of Bethesda. I wonder that such waiting had not landed me in hell! But when I heard the word, "Look!" I looked, and my burden was gone. I wondered where it had gone; I have never seen it since, and I never shall see it again. It went into the Master's tomb, and it lies forever buried there. God has said it, "I have blotted out like a cloud your iniquities, and like a thick cloud your sins." Oh, come, you needy, come to my Master! You who have been disappointed with rites and ceremonies, and feelings, and impressions, and all the hopes of the flesh—come at my Master's command, and look up to Him! He is not here in the flesh, for He has risen; but He has risen to plead for sinners, and "He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Oh, if I could know how to preach the gospel so that you would feel it, I would go to any school to learn! The Lord knows I would willingly consent to lose these eyes to get greater power in my ministry; yes, and to lose arms, legs, and all my members. I would be willing to die if I could but be honored by the Holy Spirit to win this mass of souls to God. I implore you, my brothers and sisters, you who have power in prayer, pray the Lord to bring sinners to Christ!

Let me say, solemnly, to you who have heard the word of God this day, I have told you the plan of salvation plainly; if you do not accept it, I am clear of your blood, I shake my garments of the blood of your souls. If you come not to my Lord and Master, I must bear swift witness against you at the Day of Judgment. I have told you the way—I cannot tell you it more simply—I beseech you to follow it! I entreat you to look to Jesus! But if you refuse it, at any rate, when you shall rise from the dead and stand before the great white throne, do me the justice to say that I did entreat and persuade you to escape, I did impress upon you to flee from the wrath to come. The Lord save each one of you, and His shall be the praise ever more. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
JOHN 3:14-21; JOHN 5:1-9.**

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

**PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

**By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of
C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English,
and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit:
www.spurgeongems.org**

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST
NO. 745

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 14, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE AGRICULTURAL HALL, ISLINGTON.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."
Ephesians 3:8.

THE apostle Paul felt it to be a great privilege to be allowed to preach the gospel. He did not look upon his calling as drudgery, or servitude, but he entered upon it with intense delight. All God's truly-sent servants have experienced much delight in the declaration of the gospel of Jesus; and it is natural that they should, for their message is one of mercy and love. If a herald were sent to a besieged city with the tidings that no terms of mercy would be offered, but that every rebel without exception should be put to death, I think he would go with lingering footsteps, stopping by the way to let out his heavy heart in sobs and groans; but if he were commissioned to go to the gates with the white flag to proclaim a free pardon, a general act of amnesty and oblivion, surely he would run as though he had wings on his heels, with a joyful quickness, to tell his fellow citizens the good pleasure of their merciful king. Heralds of salvation, you carry the most joyful of all messages to the sons of men! When the angels were commissioned for once to become preachers of the gospel, and it was but for once, they made the sky ring at midnight with their choral songs, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." They did not moan out a sorrowful dirge as of those proclaiming death, but the glad tidings of great joy were set to music, and announced with holy mirth and celestial song. "Peace on earth; glory to God in the highest" is the joyous note of the gospel—and in such a key should it ever be proclaimed.

We find the most eminent of God's servants frequently magnifying their office as preachers of the gospel. Whitefield was known to call his pulpit his throne; and when he stood upon some rising knoll to preach to the thousands gathered in the open air, he was happier than if he had assumed the imperial purple, for he ruled the hearts of men more gloriously than does a king! When Dr. Carey was laboring in India, and his son Felix had accepted the office of ambassador to the king of Burmah, Carey said, "Felix has driveled into an ambassador"—as though he looked upon the highest earthly office as an utter degradation if for it the minister of the gospel forsook his lofty vocation. Paul blesses God that this great grace was given to him that he might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; he looked upon it not as toil, but as a grace. Aspire to this office, young men whose souls are full of love to Jesus. Fired with sacred enthusiasm, covet earnestly the best gifts, and

out of love to Jesus try whether you cannot in your measure tell to your fellow men the story of the cross. Men of zeal and ability, if you love Jesus, make the ministry your aim; train your minds to it; exercise your souls towards it; and may God the Holy Spirit call you to it, that you also may preach the Word of reconciliation to the dying thousands. The laborers still are few; may the Lord of the harvest thrust you into His work.

But while Paul was thus thankful for his office, his success in it greatly humbled him; the fuller a vessel becomes the deeper it sinks in the water. A plenitude of grace is a cure for pride. Those who are empty, and those especially who have little or nothing to do, may indulge a fond conceit of their abilities, because they are untried; but those who are called to the stern work of ministering among the sons of men, will often mourn their weakness, and in the sense of that weakness and unworthiness, they will go before God and confess that they are less than the least of all saints. I prescribe to any of you who seek humility, try hard work; if you world know your nothingness, attempt some great thing for Jesus. If you would feel how utterly powerless you are apart from the living God, attempt especially the great work of proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ! You will come back from the proclamation thankful that you were permitted to attempt it, but crying, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm the Lord revealed?" And you will know, as you never knew before, what a weak unworthy thing you are!

Although our apostle thus knew and confessed his weakness, there is one thing which never troubled him—he was never perplexed as to the subject of his ministry. I do not find the apostle in all his writings proposing to himself the question, "What shall I preach?" No, my friends, he had been taught in the college of Christ, and had thoroughly learned his one Subject, so that preferring it beyond all else, he said, with solemn decision, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." From his first sermon to his last, when he laid down his neck upon the block to seal his testimony with his blood, Paul preached Christ and nothing but Christ. He lifted up the cross, and extolled the Son of God who bled on it. His one and only calling here below was to cry, "Behold the Lamb! Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world!"

I pause, to ask, on my own account, the prayers of God's people yet again, that the Holy Spirit may be my helper this morning. O deny not my earnest request! I call the attention of you all to this great master subject, which engrossed all the powers and passions of such a one as Paul, and I shall beg you to notice first, *a glorious person mentioned*—the Lord Jesus Christ; secondly, *unsearchable riches spoken of;* and thirdly, which shall make our practical conclusion—*a royal intention implied,* the intention which Jesus had in His heart when He bade His servants preach His unsearchable riches.

I. First then, may the Spirit of God strengthen us in our weakness while we try to speak upon THIS GLORIOUS PERSON, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the first promise of God to the sons of men after the fall. When our first parents had been banished from the garden, all was dark before them. There was not a star to gild the cheerless midnight of their guilty and despairing souls until their God appeared to them, and said in mercy, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." That was the first star which God set in the sky of man's hope. Years rolled after years, and the faithful looked up to it with comfort; that one promise stayed the soul of many a faithful one so that he died in hope, not having received the promise, but having seen it afar off, and having rejoiced in its beams. Whole centuries rolled away, but the seed of the woman did not come. Messiah, the great bruiser of the serpent's head, did not appear. Why did He tarry? The world was foul with sin and full of woe, where was the Shiloh who should bring it peace? Graves were dug by the millions, hell was filled with lost spirits, but where was the promised One, mighty to save? He was waiting till the fullness of time should come; He had not forgotten, for He had God's will in His heart; His desire to save souls was consuming His heart; He was but waiting until the word should be given. And when it was given, lo, He came delighting to do the Father's will! Do you seek him? Behold, in Bethlehem's manger Emmanuel is born, God is with us. Before your eyes He lies who was both the Son of Mary, and the Son of the Blessed, an infant, and yet infinite, of a span long, and yet filling all eternity, wrapped in swaddling cloths, and yet too great for space to hold Him. Thirty and more years He lived on earth: the latter part of His life was spent in a ministry full of suffering to Himself, but filled with good to others. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Never man spoke like that man; He was a man on fire with love; a man without human imperfections, but with all human sympathies; a man without the sins of manhood, but with something more than the sorrows of common manhood piled upon Him. There was never such a man as He, so great, so glorious in His life, and yet He is the pattern and type of manhood. He reached His greatest when He stooped the lowest. He was seized by His enemies one night when wrestling in prayer, betrayed by the man who had eaten bread with Him; He was dragged before tribunal after tribunal, through that long and sorrowful night, and wrongfully accused of blasphemy and sedition. They scourged Him; though none of His works deserved a blow, yet the plowers made deep furrows on His back. They mocked Him; though He merited the homage of all intelligent beings, yet they spat in His face, and struck Him with their mailed fists, and said, "Prophesy, who is he that struck You?"

He was made lower than a slave; even the abject opened their mouths with laughter at Him, and the slaves scoffed at Him. To end the scene, they took Him through the streets of the Jerusalem over which He had wept; they hounded Him along the Via Dolorosa, out through the gate, to the mount of doom. I think I see Him, with eyes all red with weeping He turns to the matrons of Salem, and cries, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but for yourselves, and for your children." Can you see Him bearing that heavy cross, ready to faint beneath the burden? Can you

endure to see Him, when, having reached the little mound outside the city, they hurl Him on His back, and drive the cruel iron through His hands and feet? Can you bear to see the spectacle of blood and anguish as they lift Him up between heaven and earth, made a sacrifice for the sin of His people? My words shall be few, for the vision is too sad for language to depict. He bleeds, He thirsts, He groans, He cries—at last He dies—a death whose unknown griefs are not to be imagined, and were they known would be beyond expression by human tongue.

Now, it was the history of the crucifixion which Paul delighted to preach—Christ crucified was his theme—this old, old story, which you have heard from your childhood, the story of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. You all know that our Lord, after He had been taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb, lingered there but a few short hours, and then on the third day rose again from the dead, the same, yet not the same—a man, but no more despised and rejected. He communed with His servants in a familiar and yet glorious manner for 40 days, and cheered and comforted their hearts, and then, from the top of Olivet, in the sight of the company, He ascended to His Father's throne. Follow Him with your hearts, if you cannot with your eyes. Behold Him as the angels meet Him, and—

"Bring His chariot from on high,
To bear Him to His throne;
Clap their triumphant hands, and cry,
'The glorious work is done.'"

There He sits—faith sees Him this very day—at the right hand of God, even the Father, pleading with authority for His people; ruling heaven, and earth, and hell, for the keys thereof swing at His belt; waiting till, on the flying cloud, He shall descend to judge the quick and dead, and distribute the vengeance or the reward. It was this glorious person of whom Paul delighted to speak. He preached the doctrines of the gospel, but he did not preach them apart from the person of Christ. Do not many preachers make a great mistake by preaching doctrine instead of preaching the Savior? Certainly the doctrines are to be preached, but they ought to be looked upon as the robes and vestments of the man Christ Jesus, and not as complete in themselves. I love justification by faith—I hope I shall never have a doubt about that grand truth of God; but the cleansing efficacy of the precious blood appears to me to be the best way of putting it. I delight in sanctification by the Spirit—but to be conformed to the image of Jesus is a still sweeter and more forcible way of viewing it. The doctrines of the gospel are a golden throne upon which Jesus sits as King—not a hard, cold stone rolled at the door of the sepulcher in which Christ is hidden. Brothers and sisters, I believe this to be the mark of God's true minister that he preaches Christ as his one choice and delightful theme! In the old romance novels, they tell us that at the gate of a certain noble hall there hung a horn, and none could blow that horn but the true heir to the castle and its wide domains. Many tried it. They could make sweet music on other instruments; they could wake the echoes by other bugles; but that horn was mute, let them blow as they

might. At last, the true heir came, and when he set his lips to the horn, shrill was the sound and indisputable his claim!

The true minister is he who can preach Christ. Let him preach anything else in the world, he has not proved his calling, but if he shall preach Jesus and the resurrection, he is in the apostolic succession. If Christ crucified is the great delight of his soul, the very marrow of his teaching, the fatness of his ministry, he has proved his calling as an ambassador of Christ. Brothers, the Christian minister should be like these golden spring flowers which we are so glad to see. Have you observed them when the sun is shining? They open their golden cups, and each one whispers to the great sun, "Fill me with your beams." But when the sun is hidden behind a cloud, where are they? They close their cups and droop their heads. So should the Christian feel the sweet influences of Jesus; so especially should the Christian minister be subject to his Lord that Jesus must be his Sun, and he must be the flower which yields itself to the Sun of Righteousness. Happy would it be for us if our hearts and our lips could become like Anacreon's harp which was wedded to one subject, and would learn no other. He wished to sing of the sons of Atreus, and the mighty deeds of Hercules, but his harp sounded only love; and when he would have sung of Cadmus, his harp refused—it would sing of love only. Oh, to speak of Christ alone!—to be tied and bound to this one theme forever; to speak only of Jesus, and of the amazing love of the glorious Son of God, who "though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor." This is the subject which is both "seed for the sower, and bread for the eater." This is the live coal for the lips of the preacher, and the master key to the heart of the hearer! This is the tune for the minstrels of earth, and the song for the harpers of heaven! Lord, teach it to us more and more, and we will tell it out to others!

Before I leave this subject I feel bound to make two or three remarks. You will perceive that the apostle Paul preached the unsearchable riches of Christ, not the dignity of manhood, or the grandeur of human nature; he preached not man, but man's Redeemer. Let us do the same. Moreover, he did not preach up the clergy and the church, but Christ alone. Some of the gentlemen who claim to be in the apostolic succession could hardly have the effrontery to claim to be the successors of Paul. I believe that our modern "priests" of Rome are in the apostolic succession, I have never doubted that they are the lineal successors of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed his Master; but no other apostle would endure them for so much as an hour! If Paul had been their leader, would he have preached the unsearchable riches of priestcraft as they do? Do not they preach up their own priestly power? Did Paul do this? Is not their one great theme the unsearchable riches of baptism; the unsearchable riches of the Eucharist, the blessed bread and the blessed wine; the unsearchable riches of their confession and absolution; the unsearchable riches of their robes, and their vestments, and I know not what else of the rags of the whore of Babylon? A fine day is this in which we are to go back to the superstitions of the dark ages—so dark that our forefathers could not bear them—and for the unsearchable cunning of priests are to give up

the unsearchable riches of Christ! We are told [by the priests of Rome] that the Reformation was a mistake; but we tell these false priests to their faces that they are liars and know not the truth of God! Beloved, Paul cared nothing for priestcraft; and this Book has not a word in it in favor of priestcraft. With Paul and with this Book all believers in Jesus are priests, and God's only clergy. Paul never posted bills upon the walls of Jerusalem, with black crosses on them, warning men that they would not be able to meet Christ at the Day of Judgment if they did not keep Good Friday; but I will tell you what Paul *did*—he wrote to the Galatians, "You observe days, months, and times, and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." This whole abomination of ritualism was the utter abhorrence of the apostle—in its first form of Judaism it stirred up his whole soul with indignation; it brought the blood into his cheeks; he never was mightier in denouncing anything than when dealing heavy blows at ceremonialism; he said, "Neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith that works by love." Paul preached up no priest whether he lived at Rome or Canterbury; he exalted no class of men arrogantly pretending to have power to save. He would have been out of all patience with a set of simpletons decked out as Guys [effigy of Guy Fawkes paraded and burned on Guy Fawkes Day] and dressed up as if they were meant to amuse children in a nursery. He never taught the worship of these calves—Jesus alone was his subject, and the unsearchable riches of His grace!

Mark you, on the other hand, Paul did not preach up the unsearchable riches of philosophy, as some do. "Yes," say some, "We must please this thinking age, this thoughtful people; we must educate a people who will reject all testimony because they will not be credulous; who will believe nothing but what they can understand, because, indeed, their understanding is so amazingly clear, so perfect, so all but divine!" Not so, the apostle; he would have said to these philosophical gentlemen, "Stand away; I have nothing at all that can make me kindred with you! I preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, not the uncertainties of philosophical speculation; I give the people something to believe, something tangible to lay hold of, not superstitious, it is true, but divinely accredited; not concocted by the wisdom of man, but revealed by the wisdom of God." My dear friends, we must come back to the gospel of Paul, and may God bring all His ministering servants more and more clearly back to it, that we may have nothing to preach but that which clusters around the cross; which glows and glistens like a sacred halo of light around the head of the Crucified One; that we may lift up nothing but Jesus, and say, "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

II. Secondly, Paul preached THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.

Paul had no stinted Savior to present to a few, no narrow-hearted Christ to be the head of a clique, no weak Redeemer who could pardon only those little offenders who scarcely needed it, but he preached a great Savior to the great masses, a great Savior to great sinners; he preached the Conqueror with dyed garments, traveling in the greatness of His

strength, whose name is "mighty to save." Let us inquire in what respects we may ascribe to our Lord Jesus the possession of unsearchable riches. Our answer is, first, He has *unsearchable riches of love to sinners as they are.* Jesus so loved the souls of men that we can only use the *"so,"* but we cannot find the word to match it. In the French Revolution, there was a young man condemned to the guillotine, and shut up in one of the prisons. He was greatly loved by many, but there was one who loved him more than all put together. How do we know this? It was his own father; and the love he bore his son was proved in this way: when the lists were called, the father, whose name was exactly the same as his son's, answered to the name, and the father rode in the gloomy wagon out to the place of execution, and his head rolled beneath the axe instead of his son's, a victim to mighty love. See here an image of the love of Christ to sinners; for thus Jesus died for the ungodly, viewed as such. If they had not been ungodly, neither they nor He had needed to have died; if they had not sinned, there would have been no need for a suffering Savior, but Jesus proved His boundless love in "that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Your name was in the condemned list, my fellow sinner, but, if you believe in Jesus, you shall find that your name is there no longer, for Christ's name is put in your place, and you shall learn that He suffered for you, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring you to God. Is not this the greatest wonder of divine love that it should be set upon us *as sinners?* I can understand God's loving reformed sinners and repenting sinners; but here is the glory of it, "God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners [*yet sinners!*] Christ died for us." O my hearers, from my inmost heart I pray that this boundless wealth of love on the part of Jesus to those who were rebels and enemies, may win your hearts to love the heavenly lover in return!

In the next place, Jesus has *riches of pardon for those who repent of their sins.* My Lord Jesus, by His death, has become immensely rich in pardoning power—so rich indeed that no guiltiness can possibly transcend the efficacy of His precious blood. There is one sin which He never will forgive—there is but one—and I am convinced that you have not committed that sin against the Holy Spirit if you have any feeling of repentance or desire towards God; for the sin which is unto death brings death with it to the conscience, so that when once committed, the man ceases to feel. If you desire pardon, sinner, there is no reason why you should not have it, and have it now! The blood of Christ can wash out blasphemy, adultery, fornication, lying, slander, perjury, theft, murder. Though you have raked in the very kennels of hell till you have blackened yourself to the color of a devil, yet, if you will come to Christ and ask mercy, He will absolve you from all sin. Do but wash in the bath which He has filled with blood and "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 misunderstand me, I mean just this, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not meant exclusively for you respectable people, who always appear to be so religious, but for you who are irreligious, for you who are not even moral, or sober, or honest. I tell you the gospel of

Christ is meant for the scum of the population; it is meant for the lowest of the low, for the worst of the worst. There is no den in London where the Savior cannot work; there is no loathsome haunt of sin too foul for Him to cleanse. The heathen talked of their Hercules that he cleansed the Augean stables by turning a river through them, and so washing away the filth of ages; if your heart is such a stable, Christ is greater than the mightiest Hercules—He can cause the river of His cleansing blood to flow right through your heart, and your iniquities, though they are a heap of abominations, shall be put away forever! Riches of love to sinners as such, and riches of pardon to sinners who repent, are stored up in the Lord Jesus.

Again, *Christ has riches of comfort for all who mourn.* Have I the happiness of having before me some who mourn before the Lord? Blessed are you, for you shall be filled. What is the cause of your weeping? Is it your sin? Christ has a handkerchief that can wipe away such tears. He can blot out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities. Do but come to Him, and your deepest sorrow shall disappear beneath the influence of His sympathetic love. Are you sorrowful because you have lost a friend? He will be a friend to you. Have you been deceived and betrayed? My Master can meet that craving of your nature after friendship and sympathy. Confide in Him, and He will never forsake you. Oh, I cannot tell you how rich He is in consolation, but the Holy Spirit can tell you! If you do but get Jesus, you shall find, as Bernard used to say, that He is "honey to the mouth, music to the ears, and heaven to the heart." Win Christ, and you shall need nothing beyond Him—lay hold of Him, and you shall say with the apostle, "I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content," for He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

My Master's unsearchable riches are also of another kind. Do you thirst for knowledge? *Jesus has riches of wisdom.* The desire to know has sent men roving over the entire world, but he who finds Jesus may stay at home and be wise! If you sit at His feet, you shall know what Plato could not teach you, and what Socrates never learned. When the old school men could not answer and defend a proposition, they were apt to say, "I will go to Aristotle: he shall help me out." If you do but learn of Christ, He shall help you out of all difficulties; and that which is most useful for your soul to know, the knowledge which will last you in eternity, Christ shall teach you. Think not that the gospel of Christ, because it is simple, is therefore mere child's play. Oh, no! It has that in it which an angel's intellect unillumined of the Holy Spirit might fail to master; the highest ranks of seraphim, still lost in wonder gaze upon it. Come to my Master, and you shall be made wise unto salvation.

Let me not weary you with so great a message. Perhaps I tell it badly, but the matter of it is worthy of your ears, and worthy of your hearts. *My Master has riches of happiness to bestow upon you!* After all, he is the rich man who wears heart's-ease in his button hole. The man who can say, "I have enough," is richer than the peer of the realm who is discontented. Believe me, my Lord can make you to lie down in green pastures,

and lead you beside still waters. There is no music like the music of His pipe, when He is the Shepherd and you are the sheep, and you lie down at His feet. There is no love like His, neither earth or heaven can match it! If you did but know it, you would prize it beyond all mortal joys, and say with our poet—

"Such as find You find such sweetness
Deep, mysterious, and unknown;
Far above all worldly pleasures,
If they were to meet in one;
My Beloved,
Over the mountains hasten away."

I speak experimentally. I have had more joy in half-an-hour's communion with Christ than I have found in months of other comforts. I have had much to make me happy—many successes and smiles of providence which have cheered and comforted my heart; but they are all froth on the cup, mere bubbles—the foam of life, and not its true depths of bliss. To know Christ and to be found in Him—oh, this is life! This is joy! This is marrow and fatness, wine on the lees well refined! My Master does not treat His servants churlishly; He gives to them as a king gives to a king; He gives to them two heavens—a heaven below in serving Him here, and a heaven above in delighting in Him forever!

And now I shall close this poor talk of mine about these priceless riches, by saying that *the unsearchable riches of Christ will be best known in eternity.* The riches of Christ are not so much to be enjoyed here as *there*. He will give you by the road and on the way to heaven all your needs; your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks, your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure; but it is there, *there*, THERE, where you shall hear the song of them who triumph, the shout of them who feast. My dear hearer, if you get Christ, you have obtained riches which you can take with you in the hour of death. The rich man clutched his bags of money, and as he laid them on his heart, he murmured, "They will not do, they will not do; take them away." If you receive Jesus into your heart, He will be death's best antidote. When your disembodied spirit quits this poor clay carcass, as it must, what will your silver and gold do for you then? What will your farms and your broad acres do for you then? You must leave them all behind. Even if men buy you a coffin of gold, or bury you in a tomb of marble, yet of what good will that be? But oh, if you have Christ, you can fly up to heaven to your treasure, and there you shall be rich to all the intents of bliss, world without end!

Now, dear friends, if I could have spoken as I wanted to speak, I would have done so; but the subject would have been the same. Paul preached the gospel better than I do, but even *he* could not preach a *better gospel*. Let me close this point by a few words. My Master has such riches that you cannot count them; you cannot guess them, much less can you convey their fullness in words. They are *unsearchable!* You may look, and search, and weigh, but Christ is a greater Christ than you think Him to be when your thoughts are at their greatest. My Master is more able to pardon than you to sin, more able to forgive than you to transgress. My Master is more ready to supply than you are to ask, and ten thousand

times more prepared to save than you are to be saved. Never tolerate low thoughts of my Lord Jesus. Your highest estimates will dishonor Him; when you put the crown on His head, you will only crown Him with silver when He deserves gold; when you sing the best of your songs, you will only give Him poor, discordant music, compared with what He deserves, but oh, do believe in Him, that He is a great Christ, a mighty Savior! Great sinner, come and do Him honor by trusting in Him as a great Savior! Come with your great sins and your great cares, and your great needs! Come, and welcome. Come to Him now, and the Lord will accept you, and accept you without upbraiding you.

III. Lastly, there must have been A ROYAL INTENTION in the heart of Christ in sending out Paul to preach of His unsearchable riches, because every man must have a motive for what he does, and beyond all question, Jesus Christ has a motive.

Did you ever hear of a man who employed a number of persons to go about to proclaim his riches, and call hundreds of people together, and thousands, as on this occasion, simply to tell them that So-and-So was very rich? Why, the crowds would say, "What is that to us?" But if at the conclusion, the messenger could say, "But all these riches he presents to you, and whoever among you shall desire to be made rich, can be enriched now by him." Ah! Then you would say, "Now we see the sense of it. Now we perceive the gracious drift of it all." Now, my Lord Jesus Christ is very strong, but all that strength is pledged to help a poor weak sinner to enter into heaven! My Lord Christ is a great King, and He reigns with irresistible power; but all that sovereign power He swears to give to believers to help them to reign over their sins! My Lord Jesus is as full of merit as the sea is full of salt, but every atom of that merit He vows to give to sinners who will confess that they have no merits of their own, and will trust in Him! Yes, and once more, my Lord Christ is so glorious that the very angels are not bright in His presence, for He is the Sun, and they are but as twinkling stars; but all this glory He will give *you,* poor sinner, and make you glorious in His glory if you will but trust Him! There is a motive, then, on our Lord's part for bidding us preach a full Christ.

I think I hear a whisper somewhere—there is a poor heart standing crowded in the aisle, and it is saying to itself, "Ah, *I* am full of sin! *I* am weak! *I* am lost. *I* have no merit!" My dear hearer, you do not need any merit, nor any strength, nor any goodness in yourself, for Jesus presents you with an abundance of all these in Himself. I will not care whether I have money in my own purse or not, if I have a kind friend who says, "All that I have is yours." If I may go and draw upon him whenever I please for whatever I wish, I will not desire to be independent of him, but I will live upon his fullness. Poor sinner, you must do the same! You do not need merits or strength apart from Christ—take my Master, and He will be enough for you while you shall joyfully sing, "Christ is my All!"

Two or three more words, then. The first is this—*How rich those must be who have Christ for a friend.* Will you not seek to be friends with Him? If it is true that all Christ has He gives to His people—and this is asserted over and over again in this Book—then, oh, how unspeakably blessed

must those be who can say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His!" They who get Christ to be their own property are like the man who, having long eaten of fruit from a certain tree, was no longer satisfied with having the fruit, but he needed take up the tree and plant it in his own garden. Happy those who have Christ planted as the tree of life in the soil of their hearts! You not only have His grace, and His love, and His merit, but you have HIMSELF. He is all your own. Oh, that sweet word, Jesus is mine! Jesus is mine! All that there is in His humanity, in His deity, in His living and in His dying, in His reigning and in His second advent—all is mine, for Christ is mine!

How foolish, on the other hand, must those be who will not have Christ when He is to be had for the asking! Who prefer the baubles and the bubbles of this world, and let the solid gold of eternity go by! O fools, you play with shadows and miss the substance! You dig and toil, and cover your faces with sweat, and lose your nightly rest to get this world's fleeting good, while you neglect Him who is the eternal good! O fools and slow of heart, you court this harlot world, with her painted face, when the beauties of my Master are infinitely more rich and rare! Oh, if you did but know Him, if you could but see His unspeakable riches, you would fling your toys to the wind, and follow after Him with all your heart and soul!

"But may I have Him?" asks one. May you, indeed! Who is to say no to you? Did not you hear the sweet notes of the hymn just now, "Come and welcome, come and welcome"? When heaven's big bell rings, it always sounds forth that silver note for sinners—"Come and welcome! Come and welcome!" Leave your sins, leave your follies, and leave your self-righteousness. Jesus Christ stands at the open door of grace, more willing to receive you than you are to be received by Him. "Come and welcome, come and welcome." At the top of the Hospice of St. Bernard, in the storm, when the snow is falling fast, the monks ring the great bell, and when the way cannot be seen, the traveler can almost hear the way to the house of refuge across the snowy waste. So would I ring that bell this morning! Poor lost traveler, with your sins and your fears blowing cold into your face, "Come and welcome, come and welcome," to a Savior once dead and buried for you, but now risen and pleading for you at the right hand of God! If you cannot see your way, yet hear it. "Hear, and your soul shall live; and He will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

You need nothing but Christ, dear heart; you need pump up no tears of repentance to help Christ, for He will give you repentance if you seek it of Him. You must come to Him to get repentance; you must not seek that gospel blessing anywhere but at the cross. You will need no baptisms and Lord's Suppers to rely upon; it will be your duty as a believer to profess your faith in Him, and to remember Him at His table, but these things will not help your salvation, you will be saved by Jesus and by Him alone! You need experience no terrors, you need undergo no preparation; Christ is ready to receive you *now!* Like the surgeon whose door is open for every accident that may occur; like the great hospitals on our

side the river, where, let the case be what it may, the door swings open the moment an entrance is demanded—such is my Master! Unsearchable riches are in Him, though unsearchable poverty may be in you—

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream,
All the fitness He requires,
Is to feel your need of Him—
This He gives you,
'Tis His Spirit's rising beam."

All this week long I have been fretting and worrying because I cannot preach to you as I wish, and when each of my sermons, here, [Agricultural Hall] has been over, I have wished that I could preach it again in a more earnest and fervent manner. But what can I do? O my hearers, I can preach Christ to you, but I cannot preach you to Christ! I can tell you that if you trust Him you shall be saved; I can declare to you that as the Son of God now risen, He is able to save to the uttermost them who come to Him—but I cannot make you come! Yet, I thank God, since last Sunday I have heard of some who have come; I have heard good news of some who, by the Holy Spirit's power, have believed in Jesus! Are there no more eyes that will look at my Master's wounds? Are there no more hearts that will fall in love with my Master's beauties? Must I come a wooing for Him, and get so small a return? Must it be ones and twos out of the 20,000 of you? God forbid it! God send us a greater rate of fruit than this, a hundred-fold harvest to a hundred-fold congregation. Pray, believers, pray for a blessing! Pray that God may strike these lips dumb before next Sunday if He will do more good by some other preacher than by me! Ask nothing for me, but ask large things for my Lord, for the Crucified One! Pray that these great gatherings may not be without a permanent result which shall tell upon the impiety of this city; yes, and tell upon the piety of it, too, slaying the first, and stimulating the second! God send forth the Spirit of His grace, and unto Him shall be the praise, world without end! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE END OF THE RIGHTEOUS DESIRED
NO. 746

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 21, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE AGRICULTURAL HALL, ISLINGTON.

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Numbers 23:10.

CARLYLE, in his *History of the French Revolution,* tells us of a Duke of Orleans who did not believe in death; so that when his secretary stumbled on the words, "The late King of Spain," he angrily demanded what he meant by it. The flattering attendant replied, "My Lord, it is a title which some of the kings of Spain have taken." In all this assembly I have not such a lunatic; for you unanimously believe that the entire race of men await alike the inevitable hour. We know that all our paths, wind as they may, will lead to the grave. A certain king of France believed in death, but forbade that it should ever be mentioned in his presence. "And if," said he, "I at any time look pale, no courtier must dare, on pain of my displeasure, to mention it in my presence," thus imitating the foolish ostrich, which, when pursued by the hunter, and utterly unable to escape, is said to hide its head in the sand fancying that it is secure from the enemy which it cannot see. I trust I do not address today any men as idiotic as to desire to forget the certainty of death, or to thrust the fact from their remembrance. I trust that, being sane men, you desire to look in the face the whole of your future history, both in the present world and in worlds beyond the region of sight; and, foreseeing that soul and body must part in the article of death, you are desirous to consider that event, that you may be prepared for it. You desire to take death into your reckoning that it may not surprise you. He who would go upon a long journey, and provide for every difficulty on the road but one, would probably find the journey a failure. If, with a rolling chariot for the solid ways, he had forgotten to find the means of crossing the last *river* which would divide him from the country which he sought, he would be disappointed after all his pains. If you have provided for life, but have not also prepared for death, what better will you be, my hearer, than such a foolish traveler?

We have heard of one, who, going into a tavern, ordered according to his wildest wishes, and feasted sumptuously on the best the house afforded, hour after hour; but when the host came with the bill, he told him that he had no money, and had quite forgotten the reckoning, thinking it quite enough to attend to the eating and drinking while these were the order of the day, without perplexing himself about the unknown fu-

ture. Alas, my hearer, are *you* living in this inn of life, forgetting the reckoning? Do you go from cup to cup, from merriment to merriment, feasting as though there were no day of account appointed for you? If so, are you fool or knave, or both? A man who would enjoy life, and yet shirk the account of his responsibilities with which the scene must close, is either foolish, or knavish, or both. Surely, since we must die, since "there is no discharge in this war," since every man must be a conscript to the army of death, since whether it is tomorrow or the next day, or in a few years time, every one of us must pass through the iron gate, it behooves us, knowing the fact, to take it into our account, to be diligent in forestalling its demands, and providing for its emergencies. And yet I should not wonder if many here almost shudder at the subject which I am now introducing, so unaccustomed are they to it; or, if they listen to it, they consider it to be especially applicable to those by whom they are surrounded, but they fail to see its application to themselves! Young's verse is true—"All men think all men mortal but themselves." They regard others as having death written upon their brow, but they imagine that they, at least, shall last for years to come. They will not dare *admit* that they are immortal, yet alas, they act as if they thought they were so; and trifling away year after year, allow life itself to disappear without improvement. I beseech all honest and wise hearts at this hour to reflect upon their latter end. Prepare now that you may be ready when the final summons shall be sounded, and may God grant you grace that the words of this morning may be made helpful to your preparations.

Balaam, though a base man, was no fool. He had thoughts of death. He did not shut his eyes to what he did not like. He believed that he would die, and he had desires about it; and though those desires were never realized, but the reverse, yet he had wit enough to gaze upon the tents of God's chosen Israel, and to say from his heart, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

I shall regard this exclamation as having in *it a double wish;* first, *a wish concerning death,* and secondly, *a wish concerning the after death.* When these have been spoken upon as the Holy Spirit may help me, I shall try to make some *practical use of the whole.*

I. First, dear friends, Balaam's WISH CONCERNING DEATH.

He anxiously desired that he might die such a death as the righteous die. Truly we commend his choice, for, in the first place, *it must, at the least, be as well with the righteous man when he comes to die, as with any other man.* By the righteous man we mean the man who has believed in Jesus Christ, and so has been covered with Christ's righteousness, and washed in His most precious blood, and moreover, has by the power of the Holy Spirit received a new heart, a righteous heart, so that his actions are righteous both towards God and man. Such a man being righteous by faith in Jesus Christ unto perfect justification, and righteous also in act and spirit through sanctification of the Holy Spirit, is alone the truly righteous man. Such a man *will be* right at last, and this you will

see clearly by the following story. A certain carping infidel, after having argued with a poor countryman who knew the faith, but who knew little else, said to him, "Well, Hodge, you really are so stupid that there is no use arguing with you, I cannot get you out of this absurd religion of yours." "Ah, well," said Hodge, "I dare say I am stupid, Master, but do you know we poor people like to have two strings to our bow?" "Well," said the critic, "what do you mean by that?" "Master, I'll show you. Suppose it should all turn out as you say; suppose there is no God, and there is no hereafter, don't you see I am as well off as you are? Certainly, it will not be any worse for me than it will be for you if we, both of us, get annihilated. But don't you see if it should happen to be true as I believe, what will become of you?" Clearly in either case it must be right with the righteous, for if he should have ignorantly received a cunningly devised fable, yet, seeing according to his own experience, it makes him a better and a happier man. So far so good—he is no loser here; and he will be certainly at the last in no worse a position than the man who rejected the holy and comfortable influences of what he styled a deception. While, if the religion of Jesus should be true—ah, ghastly IF for you who doubt it!—if it should all be true, ah, then your weeping and your wailing at the discovery will be a terrible contrast to the joy and the glory which God has reserved for them who love Him! Upon the very lowest possible ground it will be well with the righteous, as well at any rate as with the best of other men.

There is this to be said for the righteous man; he goes to the death chamber *with a quiet conscience.* It has been clearly ascertained that in the event of death, the mind is frequently quickened to a high degree of activity, so that it thinks more, perhaps, in the course of five minutes than it could have done in the course of years at other times. Persons who have been rescued from drowning have said that they imagined themselves to have been weeks in the water, for the thoughts, the many views and visions, the long and detailed retrospect seemed to them to have required weeks, and yet the whole transpired in a few seconds. Frequently towards the last, the soul travels at express speed, traversing its past life as though it rode upon lightning. Ah, then how blessed is that man who, looking back upon the past can see many things of which conscience can approve! And how accursed must that man's deathbed be who has to look back upon a youth spent in folly, a middle life of sin, and an old age of iniquity! What will it be, my hearer, if, when you lie dying, there should rise up before your memory those whom you led into sin, seduced to vice, or taught in profligacy! A grim assemblage must gather around some men's beds when guilt, like a grim chamberlain, shall usher them in one by one, and call out their names with horrible distinctness, and tell out their doings and dealings with the wretch who shivers on the brink of death accused by so many, and unable to answer one of a thousand. I picture such a man traveling over the wastes of remorse, hounded by the wolves of his past sins, rushing with desperation into a

destruction still worse than his present woe, all unable to endure the horrible baying of his old sins, much less to endure their sharper fangs when they shall tear him in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver!

But the righteous man knows that though his sins were as scarlet, they have been made white as wool through the precious blood of Christ; and moreover, by the power of the Holy Spirit, his life has been kept from the vices of the world, and he has been enabled to serve his Lord; this surely must help to make soft his dying pillow. He remembers those holy days of sacred worship, those gatherings around the family altar, that child taught to pray, that young man won from folly and led in the paths of righteousness; above all he remembers the love visits which the Lord Jesus has paid to his favored soul; and so, perfectly at peace, forgiving all men their offenses as he desires to be forgiven, and conscious that his Father has forgiven him, he can sleep upon his dying bed as softly as on the stillest night of his life. "Let me," in this sense, "die the death of the righteous."

Again, the righteous man, when he dies, *does not lose his all.* With every other man the sound of "earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes," is the end of present seeming wealth and the beginning of eternal and real need. But the Christian is not made a bankrupt by the grave—death to him is gain. "Go," said the dying Saracen hero, Saladin, "take this winding sheet, and as soon as I expire, bear it on a lance through all the streets, and let the herald cry as he holds aloft the ensign of death, 'This is all that is left of Saladin, the conqueror of the East.'" He need not have so said if he had been a Christian, for the believer's heritage is not torn from him, but opened up to him by the rough hand of death. The world to come and all its infinite riches and blessedness are ours in the moment of departure. It is written upon the tomb of Cyrus, "Stranger, here lies Cyrus, who gave the empire to the Persians; grudge him not the little earth that covers him." But the Christian lies not there under the tombstone; he is not here, for he is risen; he has left his poor worn garments here to be washed, and cleansed, and purified; and by-and-by, when they are whiter than any fuller can make them, he will come to take his garments again; but meanwhile the Christian is not buried here, nor is the tomb his sole possession; his treasure is in heaven, and he is gone where his wealth is stored. Who would not wish to die a death which would be a gain to him? Are you not conscious some of you, that death would be a horrible loss to you? It would shut up forever all the outlets of your present mirth, and all the sources of your present joy. Alas for you! For the day of the Lord to you will be darkness and not light!

"Let me die the death of the righteous" may well be our wish, because *he dies with a good hope.* Peering into eternity, with eyes marvelously strengthened, the believer frequently beholds even while he is yet below, something of the glory which is to be revealed in him. Have you ever heard the songs of dying women, and seen their glowing countenances as

they thought they could hear the angels, and all but see the invisible glory? Have you ever seen their beaming eyes and heard their memorable words, so rich, so original, so quaint, and so wet with the dew of heaven, that they could not have borrowed them? Ignorant, unlettered persons have I heard say in their dying moments words which were worthy of the most refined poetry. Have you ever seen the gray-headed man who, in his weakness, had come to talk as a child, suddenly clothed with patriarchal dignity, as, stretching out his bony hand he has exclaimed, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me"? It is sweet to die with Canaan's happy land in view—to melt into eternal bliss, as the twilight of the morning melts into opening day. It must be a dreary thing to die believing in annihilation, or expecting a doom still worse. My hearer, will this be your death? Will you hear the warning cry of the angel: "One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more"? Death is past, but the judgment and the pit of hell are yet to come. God forbid that such horrors should freeze the genial current of my soul, but may eternal bliss be my prospect from the top of my expiring Pisgah. Let me die as the Christian whose eye is resplendent with visions of light, and whose heart is fired with the confidence of seeing his Redeemer and being made like He is, to dwell with Him world without end!

Moreover, beloved, *the believer dies in the arms of a friend.* I do not say in the arms of a mortal friend, for it has fallen to the lot of some Christians to be burnt at the stake; and some of them have rotted to death in dungeons; but yet I will repeat it, every believer dies in the arms of a friend—the best of friends, the friend who sticks closer than a brother. Precious is communion with the Son of God, and never more so than when it is enjoyed upon the verge of heaven—

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

Jesus is a friend who is most practically friendly, for the righteous man, in the calmest and business-like manner, leaves his wife and his children in the hands of God and quotes the promise, "Leave your fatherless children, and let your widows trust in Me." He would gladly live, perhaps, to comfort the partner of his bosom a little longer, and to see the children of their mutual love brought up to riper manhood, but since he must go, how often does God enable him to forget all care, to cast it so completely into the hands of Christ, that he sings, "All is well!" I have sometimes heard from dying saints sentences like these, "My business is all settled, I never want to hear again of the stock, of the farm, or of the shop, or of the family, I have put it all away; God will provide for those I have left behind, and I have nothing now to do but just to hear the summons, 'Come up higher,' and then to enter into my Father's House." My hearers, I am not giving you an exaggerated picture; I am not telling you some

wondrous stories of remarkable departures, but I am telling you what is the common way of the dying of the righteous, which I trust commends itself to your conscience as being naturally that which righteous men might expect to feel when returning to their God. *The Christian dies in peace, and often in triumph.* According to the state of his body or the disease by which he may be taken off, his feelings will vary between peace and triumph. Sometimes the death scene is still as a summer's evening, and the Christian crosses the Jordan almost dry shod; or if there is a storm, and Jordan overflows its banks, the believer resting upon the everlasting arms, feels the bottom of the river and finds it good. At times, however, God has been pleased to give to His people grace to mount to heaven in a chariot of fiery joy, so that their dying bed has been a throne, and their chamber a palace of glory. These instances are not uncommon, they are probably the rule; but in all cases there is a strong, deep current of pure and precious peace which glides along the valley of death, and makes glad the follower of the Lamb—"Let me die the death of the righteous," for such dying is the dawn of bliss, the beginning of immortal glory!

Lastly, when the good man dies, *he dies with honor.* Who cares for the death of the wicked? A few mourning friends lament for a little time, but they almost feel it a relief within a day or two that such a one is gone. As for the righteous, when he dies there is weeping and mourning for him. Like Stephen, devout men carry him to the sepulcher, and make great lamentation over him. See the funeral of the weeds? They are hurried up in heaps, they are thrown over the garden wall, they are burned, and no one regrets them; they were no blessing in living, they are no lamentation in dying. Did you ever see the funeral of the wheat, if such I may call it? Here come the golden sheaves. The wagon is heavy with the precious freight: on the top stands one who gives a cheery note; and all around the harvest men and village maidens dance or shout for joy as they bring home the shocks of golden corn to the garner. Let me be gathered home with the triumphant funeral of the wheat which man values, garnered by angels, housed with songs of saintly spirits, and not cast away as a reprobate and worthless thing, like the weeds of which men are thankful to be rid. May it be yours and mine, when we depart, to be remembered by those whom we have succored in their need, whom we instructed in their ignorance, whom we comforted in their distress! May we not depart from this world shaken off from it, as Paul shook the viper from his hand, but may our ashes be gathered up as sacred dust, precious in the sight of the Lord. Let me, in that sense and every other, "die the death of the righteous." I need not tarry long on this point. Any one of these suggestions might suffice to incite, even in such a man as Balaam, a desire to "die the death of the righteous." Surely it will kindle in you the same longings.

II. Balaam spoke concerning the godly man, of HIS LAST END.

I do not know that this wicked prophet, whose eyes were once opened, knew anything about this latter end as I shall interpret it; but you and I know, and so let us use his words, if not his thoughts. We do not believe that death is the last end of men. Those who do believe it are welcome to their belief. We certainly shall not wish to deprive them of it. When a dog has his bone, let him keep it; we envy not his enjoyment. If ungodly men delight in the thought of dying like brutes, perhaps they know their own value best, and know what would be best for society if it should happen to them; so they, having made their choice, shall keep it if they will. As for us, we believe ourselves to be immortal; that God has endowed us with a spiritual nature which shall outlive the sun, outlast the stars, and run on existing with eternity. Like the years of God's right hand, like the days of the Most High, God has ordained the life of souls to be. Now, I can well believe that the most of us wish that our position after death may be like that of the righteous. The first consideration in death is that *the spirit is disembodied.* What a spirit is like without a body you and I cannot guess; it is, of course, not a thing to be seen, or heard, or touched, or handled. It is quite out of the realm of materialism, and quite beyond the reach of the senses. Yet you and I are conscious that there is an immaterial something within us infinitely more precious than these poor clay hands, and feet, and eyes of ours. This immaterial something will leave the body, and it will be naked; not a thing to be desired, for even Paul says, "Not that we would be unclothed." He did not desire the disembodied state for its own sake, nor should we. Those disembodied saints who are now in heaven are happy, perfectly happy as to their souls, but they, as to their manhood, are not yet made perfect. They, without us, the apostle says, cannot be made perfect; until we all are gathered in, and the resurrection day comes, they are without bodies; and are, as it were, but half men; all the powers they have are full of happiness, but they are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body which will be at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what is there desirable in the state of the Christian when his spirit is disembodied? I should desire to be like a Christian in the disembodied state, because *he will not be altogether in a new and strange world.* Some of you have never exercised your spirits at all about the spirit-world. You have talked with thousands of people in bodies, but you have never spoken with spiritual beings; to you the realm of spirit is all unknown; but let me tell you, Christians are in the daily habit of communing with the spirit-world, by which I mean that their souls converse with God; their spirits are affected by the Holy Spirit; they have fellowship with angels who are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation. Now, when some of you enter into the spirit-world, you will say, "I never was here before; this is a foreign land to me." I can conceive that you will call for some companion. "Is there anyone here with whom I have had dealings?" And there will be a voice heard, "Yes, I have often spoken to you, and you to me." "Who is that?" It is Satan or some

evil spirit with whom alone out of all spirits you have ever had communion; he will be the only friend to meet you—and what a friend! Your grim companion, your fellow sinner, and your fellow prisoner forever! But a Christian in the disembodied state, if I may so imagine it, might cry, "Where are my friends? I have been here before! Where are those with whom before I had fellowship?" And a response will come from the ministering angels, and there, above all, will be the blessed Spirit of God; there will be God Himself, and the Spirit of the ever-living Christ! All these will make up sweet company for the believer. After the soul has left the body, we believe that it *at once appears before God, and receives by anticipation, what will be its final sentence.* To the righteous soul there is no sleeping in the grave, no delay in "purgatory" before he enters into heaven. *"Today* shall you be with Me in paradise," is the portion of all who trust in Jesus!

Now, think, dear hearer, your disembodied spirit will have to appear before the fiery eyes of God! What, then, is your relation to God this morning? Why, some of you never think of Him; some of you, I almost blush to say it, have cursed Him to His face, and have even asked Him to damn you! Ah, He *will* do it, unless you repent! But how delightful must it be for a man to say, "I am going up to God; He is my Father; it is no more terror to me than for a child to go home from school; I am going to my God with whom I am reconciled by the precious blood of Jesus; I have known my God, He is no stranger to me; I saw Him in Christ, and I trusted Him; and all my life long I learned to see Him in the works of nature—I could say of the mountains and the valleys, 'My Father made them all.' I was never so happy as when thoughts of God came flowing into my spirit. My spirit has dwelt with God when in the body; it is not afraid to fly up to God now that it has left the body behind it." Surely, in the prospect of such a judgment, each man may say, "Let my last end be like his!"

After the judgment is pronounced, *the disembodied spirit dwells in heaven.* Some of you could not be happy if you were allowed to enter that heaven. If you could be admitted between those pearly gates which forever exclude pollution, sin, and shame, you could not be happy there. Shall I tell you why? It is a land of spirit, and you have neglected your spirit; some of you even deny that you have a spirit, and I do not wonder that you say so because I do not suppose that you have ever exercised it; but let a man who has delighted to commune with the Holy Spirit enter into the spirit-world, and he will be in his element! Besides, the world to come is a holy world; the engagements of disembodied spirits are all pure and lovely. What will that man do who loved drunkenness, who indulged in unclean habits? He will be out of his element. If he could be in heaven, as Whitefield used to say, he would ask God to let him out, and would run into hell for shelter, for heaven would be a dreadful place to an ungodly man! There is a dream which is told (I tell it not for the dream, but for the moral of it) of a young woman who imagined that she was in

heaven unconverted, and thought she saw upon the pavement of transparent gold, multitudes of spirits dancing to the sweetest music. She stood still, unhappy, motionless, silent, and when the King said to her, "Why do you not partake in the joy?" she answered, "I cannot join in the dance, for I do not know the steps; I cannot join in the song, for I do not know the tune." Then said He in a voice of thunder, "What are you doing here?" And she thought herself cast out forever. Ah, dear hearer! Heaven is a *prepared* place for a *prepared* people. If you do not learn heaven's language on earth you cannot learn it in the world to come. If you are not holy you cannot be with holy saints. What a misery would it be for you to be always with those who are praising and serving God if you know nothing of His love. If you have never praised Him on earth, you will not readily take to it there. You would be strangers in a strange land. Ah, trouble not yourselves that shall never be your portion! "Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," much less can he ever enter there.

After a while our bodies will be raised again; the soul will re-enter the body, for Christ has not only bought the souls of His people, but their bodies, too. Think of that tremendous day, when the trumpet shall be heard, shrill as a clarion, ringing through earth, and heaven, and hell, "Awake, you dead! Awake, you dead! And come to judgment! Come to judgment, come away!" Then up will start the bodies of the wicked. I know not in what shapes of dread they will arise, nor how they will appear. What forms of ghastliness they will put on; what horrors will wreathe their brows, I cannot tell; but this I know, that when the righteous shall rise they will be glorious like the Lord Jesus; they shall have all the loveliness which heaven itself can give them. Their body here is but a shriveled grain sown in the earth; their next body will be as much more glorious than that as the sweetest flower of spring is fairer than the shriveled seed that was cast into the ground. It will be a glorious body, raised in honor, raised in power, raised no more to die! Oh, glorious hour! "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." Would you not wish to rise in the image of Christ as the righteous will? Remember you must rise from the grave very much what you are when put into it. I think I see a perfect model of a city before me, containing all that is to be built. Here I see a temple of alabaster, and there a dunghill. The architect is bid to produce on the largest scale, in the purest marble, that city as modeled before him. Rest assured that he will produce the temple as a temple, only far more splendid, and the dunghill as a dunghill, only 10,000 times more loathsome. Now, which are you in that model? Remember this life is a model of the life to come, and it is written, "He who is filthy, let him be filthy still, and he who is holy, let him be holy still." Ah, my hearer, you may well wish to be holy here, that you may be holy *there;* to be pure

here, that you may be pure there; to be godlike on earth, that you may be godlike in heaven. "Let my last end be like that of the righteous." Let me wave the palm of victory; let me wear the crown of triumph; let me be girt about with the fair white linen of immaculate perfection; let me cast my crown before Jehovah's feet; let me swell the everlasting song; let my voice make one in that eternal chorus, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigns!" Oh, how will I sing! How sweetly shall my voice be attuned to notes of gratitude! How will my heart dance with ecstasy before that throne! "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

III. As this is the last occasion of my preaching in this great hall, I shall venture to trespass a little longer; and on the third head I shall most earnestly ask your solemn attention for a few minutes longer. We have to make A PRACTICAL USE OF THE WHOLE.

Behold the vanity of mere desires. Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous, and yet was slain in battle fighting against those righteous men whom he envied. There is an old proverb which says, "Wishers and woulders make bad housekeepers," and another which declares, "Wishing never filled a sack." I commend the truth of those proverbs to you now. Mere desiring to die the death of the righteous, though it may be natural, will be exceedingly unprofitable. I beseech you stop not there. Have you ever heard the old classic story of those ancient Gauls who, having once drunk the sweet wines of Italy, constantly, as they smacked their lips, said one to another, "Where is Italy?" And when their leaders pointed to the gigantic Alps crowned with snow, they said, "Cannot we cross them?" Every time they tasted the wine the questions were put, "Where is Italy? And cannot we reach it?" This was good plain sense. So they put on their war harness and marched to old Rome to fight for the wines of Italy. So, my brothers and sisters, every time you hear of heaven, I should like you, with Gothic ardor, to say, "Where is it? I gladly would go." And happy should I be if men here would put on the harness of the Christian, and say, "Through floods and flames for such a conquest, to drink of such wines well refined, we would gladly go to the battle that we may win the victory." Oh, the folly of those who, knowing and desiring this, yet spend their strength for nothing! The Roman Emperor fitted out a great expedition and sent it to conquer Britain. The valiant legionaries leaped ashore, and each man gathered a handful of shells, and went back to his ship again—that was all. Some of you are equally foolish. You are fitted by God for great endeavors and lofty enterprises, and you are gathering shells! Your gold and your silver, your houses and your lands—they are mere empty shells—and heaven and everlasting life you let go. Like Nero, you send to Alexandria for sand for your amusements, and send not for wheat for your starving souls! O fools and slow of heart, when shall God, who gave you souls, give those souls wisdom that you may seek after the true treasure, the real pearl, the heavenly riches? "Well," cries one, "how is heaven to be had?" It is to be had only

by a personal seeking after it. I have read of one who, when drowning, saw the rainbow in the heavens. Picture him as he sinks; he looks up, and there if he sees the many-colored rainbow, he may think to himself, "There is God's covenant sign that the world shall never be drowned, and yet here I am drowning in this river." So it is with you. There is the arch of God's promise over you, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," and yet, because you *believe not in Him, you will be drowned in your sins!*

"I would gladly enlist, then," says one, "in the army of Christ, and fight for heaven." Come on, then, I am Christ's enlisting officer today. "What am I to give?" asks one. Give? Give nothing! "But I have many good works." These are not to be brought as a price for heaven. "I have my prayers, and my tears of repentance." These are of no use meritoriously; if you want to be a Christian, you must come to Christ with empty hands. You know how the recruiting sergeant makes a soldier—not by asking the man to give him something, but by getting him to take the Queen's shilling. Take Christ—that is God's enlisting money—and you are enlisted. Do not bring anything, but take the Water of Life freely. If you will trust the Lord Jesus, and take Him to be your salvation, you are then enlisted as a soldier of Jesus. Oh, may you have grace to do that! But remember, all soldiers have to fight. One of the first things you will have to do, if you become a Christian, is to carry a cross. Ah, you do not like it. "His yoke is easy, and His burden is light." Take it upon you—and yet to carnal shoulders the cross of Christ is very galling—and nothing but grace can make it light. You will have to give up your sins; you will have to give up your empty pleasures; you will have to, from now on, bear witness for Christ before a crooked and perverse generation. Do not expect to be Christ's soldier, and yet not wear His uniform. No; you must put on his regimentals; you must wear His crest—His crest is the cross; you must take His shield, the shield of faith; and His sword, which is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, and resting alone on Him, depending alone upon His merit, you shall certainly win the victory.

My brothers and sisters, what a blessing it will be if you and I shall ever reach the land of triumph. You remember Bunyan's picture. He says he saw a brave palace, and as he looked up he could hear happy spirits singing on the top. They walked in white, clad in royal robes; and as he heard them singing, he longed to be with them. Going up to the door, he noticed that it was beset with armed men, a great host, with pikes, and halberds, and swords, pushing back all who desired to come. Presently he saw a man of bold countenance, covered with armor, go up to a man who sat at a table with a writer's ink-horn; and he heard him say, "Set down my name, sir." And as soon as the name was set down, the man drew his sword and began to hack and hew right and left, cutting himself a way right through the midst of his enemies. After being covered with sweat and blood, and many wounds, he at length forced an entrance;

and Bunyan says, "I did hear them sweetly sing at the top, 'Come in! Come in! Eternal glory you shall win.'" I am this morning the man with the writer's ink-horn. Is there anyone here who will say, "Set my name down, sir"? I trust it will be so. I trust the Holy Spirit will win your hearts for Jesus, that you will rest in Him alone; but the moment your name is down, remember then the battle begins; then, with your sword drawn, you must begin to contend with your besetting sins; you must have done with your old ways, and must fight against them. You will have to cut as never soldier did, for you will have to wound yourself—it will be your own arms and eyes that will have to be given up, your own sins that will have to be slain! But, oh, the victory will make amends for it all! It was but the other day that on this floor men wrestled for the mastery—a dangerous sport in which few of us would like to take a share—but I do not doubt that to those who gained the victory, the victory seemed an ample compensation. Certainly to Rome's old legionaries, when they rode through the streets, and all the people climbed to the very chimney tops to see them ride the streets of Rome, it was enough reward for all their hardships; but the triumphs of heaven, the shouts of angels, the songs of the redeemed, the hallelujahs, the bliss forever, the glory without end, oh, those will be an abundant recompense to the humble followers of the Lamb! Be of good courage, my brothers and sisters! Follow the Captain of your salvation! Forward to the fight, to the victory, and to the crown! And may the Lord so bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Psa 73:1-20; Rev 7:9-17.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of
C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English,
and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit:
www.spurgeongems.org

"MAKE THIS VALLEY FULL OF DITCHES"
NO. 747

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 28, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he said, Thus says the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus says the Lord, You shall not see wind, neither shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that you may drink, both you, and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: He will deliver the Moabites also into your hand."
2 Kings 3:16-18.

MANY useful lessons might be gathered from this narrative if we had but time. Upon the very surface we are led to observe the weakness of man when at his utmost strength. Three kings, with three armies well-skilled in war, were gathered to subdue Moab, and lo, the whole of the hosts were brought to a standstill by the simple circumstance that there was a lack of water. How easily can God bewilder and checkmate all the wisdom and the strength of mankind! In circumstances of need how utterly without strength men become! A dry leaf in the hurricane is not more helpless than an army when it finds itself in a wilderness and there are no springs of water. Now they may call their soothsayers, but these cannot deliver them. The allied sovereigns may sit in solemn conclave, but they cannot command the clouds. In vain your shields, O you mighty! In vain your banners, you valiant hosts! The armies must perish, perish painfully, perish without exception, and all for lack of so simple but so necessary a thing as water. Man would gladly play the god, and yet a little water will lay him low.

We may also learn here how easily men in times of difficulty which they have brought upon themselves, will lay their distress upon providence rather than honestly see it to be the result of their own foolish actions. Hear the king of Israel cast the blame upon Jehovah: "For the Lord has called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hands of Moab." Providence is a most convenient horse to bear the saddles of our folly. As I said in the reading, if we prosper and succeed, we proudly sacrifice to our own wisdom; but if shame and loss follow our folly, then we complain of an unpropitious providence. Alas for man, that he will even rail against his God, rather than acknowledge himself to be in error! Yet we see, on the other hand, that the truly spiritual are by their misfortunes and their necessities driven nearer to God. I do not find Jehoshaphat himself inquiring for a prophet of God until there was no water, and then he said, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?" When tribulation drives us to the Lord, it is an unspeakable blessing, and makes affliction prove to us one of our greatest mercies. It is a good wave that washes the mariner on the rock; it is a

blessed trouble which blows the Christian nearer to his God. If you are led to set loose of the world through your losses and your crosses, be thankful for them; for, if you have lost silver, you have gained that which is better than gold. If, like the dove to the cleft of the rock, your soul flies to God, driven homeward by stress of weather, then be thankful for the tempest for it is safer and better for you than the calm.

But we have no time to dwell on these topics. I rather call your attention to the three kings standing at the door of Elisha's tent. They had paid him no respect before; he had not been made chaplain to the forces, but he had followed the camp as a volunteer, and lived in obscurity. The poor wise man is precious in the hour of peril. God knows how to bring His servants to honor; and he who poured water on the hands of the Lord's servant, Elijah, has three kings waiting at his door. Observe that he addressed the king of Israel very sharply indeed, for sinners can claim but little respect from the servants of God—no more than rebels can expect to be treated with profound courtesy by loyal soldiers. The prophet evidently was much disturbed in his mind by the sight of the son of Ahab and Jezebel. Elijah never spoke better than when his fiery soul was thoroughly excited; but Elisha was a man of a milder mood and a gentler spirit, and therefore feeling that his blood was hot and his soul stirred, he did not venture to prophesy. He felt within himself, "I am not in the right mood. If I were to speak, I might utter my own words rather than the words of my Master. I feel so angry at the very sight of that wicked Jehoram, that I might perhaps say what I should be sorry for in later days." Therefore Elisha makes a pause. "Bring me a minstrel," he said; and there was doubtless in the camp some holy songster, some Asaph, some Heman, some sweet psalmist of Israel; and when he laid his fingers among the harp strings, and began to sing one of David's wondrous strains, the prophet grew more calm and composed. "Sing us one of the songs of Zion," was doubtless his request to the minstrel; and, when the soft sweet strain had soothed the tumult of his storm-tossed passions, the prophet rose to declare the will of Jehovah. His words were short, but full of force: "Make this valley full of ditches, for thus says the Lord, that valley shall be filled with water." He would not speak until he felt the divine flame; in the same spirit as those disciples who tarried at Jerusalem until they had received power from on high, he waited until his mind was in a fit state to receive the Holy Spirit, and be the vehicle of the divine mind to those who were round about him. It is well for us, if we have to preach or pray, always to ask the Spirit to help our infirmity, and tune our hearts to the right key, for though our God can use us in any frame of mind, yet we must all be aware that there are certain states in which we become more adapted to be the vehicle of blessing to our fellow men.

The whole of this story may be made useful to ourselves, and therefore we shall notice, first, *our position as set forth by the condition of these kings;* secondly, *our duty as told us by the prophet;* thirdly, *the Lord's modes of operation as here described;* and then, fourthly, *our further de-*

sire for something yet greater than the supply of our merely pressing necessities.

I. First, then, let us review OUR PRESENT POSITION.

The armies of these kings were in a position of abject dependence—they were dying of thirst; they could not supply their need; they must have from God the help required or they would perish. My brothers and sisters, this is just the position of every Christian church. Every truly Christian church not only is dependent upon God, but feels it, and there is a grave difference between the two; for some churches whose creed is orthodox upon this point, nevertheless act as if they could do as well without the Holy Spirit as with Him. I trust *we* may never be brought into such a condition. Remember, my brothers and sisters, unless our religion is altogether hypocrisy and a lie, we have the Holy Spirit. It is not we *may* have Him and be thankful, but we *must* have the Holy Spirit's power and presence, and the assistance of the Most High, otherwise our religion will become a mockery before God, and a misery to ourselves. We *must* have the aid of the Holy Spirit, for ours is not a mechanical religion. If our worship consisted in the reading of forms, "appointed by authority," we could do exceedingly well without the assistance of the Spirit of God. If we believed in the manipulations of priestcraft, and thought that after certain words, and genuflections, and ceremonies, all was done, it would matter little to us whether we had the conscious presence of God or not. If we could regenerate by water applied by hands saturated with the oil of apostolic succession, we should have no particular need to pray for the benediction of the Holy Spirit; and if the utterance of certain words, even if by profane lips, could turn bread and wine—oh, horrible dogma!—into the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, we could wondrously well afford to dispense with the Spirit of God. But *we* cannot thus deceive ourselves. Ours is not a religion of mechanics and hydrostatics—it is *spiritual*, and must be sustained by spiritual means. If our religion were, on the other hand, one of mere intellectualism, we would only need a well-trained minister who had passed through all the grades of human learning, who had stored himself with the best biblical criticism, and was able to instruct and illuminate our understandings, and we, if we were men of judgment ourselves, could profit exceedingly well. Our faith standing in the wisdom of man, the wisdom of man could easily be found, and our faith could be confirmed. But if, my brothers and sisters, our faith stands not in the wisdom of man, or in the eloquence of human lips, but in the power of God, then in vain do we make a profession unless the Holy Spirit dwells in our inner man!

So dependent is the Christian church upon the Holy Spirit, that there never was an acceptable sigh heaved by a penitent apart from Him; never did a holy song mount to heaven except He gave it wings; never was there true prayer or faithful ministry except through the power and might of the Holy Spirit. Sinners are never saved apart from the Spirit of God. No moral persuasion, no force of example, no potency of logic, no might of rhetoric, ever changed the heart. The living Spirit alone can put

life into dead souls. And when those souls are quickened, we are still as dependent as ever upon the Spirit of God. To educate a soul for heaven is as much a divine task as to emancipate a soul from sin. To comfort a desponding Christian, to strengthen his weak hands and confirm his feeble knees, to brighten the eyes of his hope and to give him nerve to hold the shield of his faith—all these are the work of the Spirit of the living God. O Christian, with all the power you have received, you have not strength enough to live for another second, except as the Spirit of God quickens you. All your past experience, all that you have learned and acquired, must go for nothing, except, daily and perpetually, moment by moment, the Spirit of God shall dwell in you, and work in you mightily, to keep you still a pilgrim to the gate of heaven.

Thus, as each individual is dependent, the whole church is dependent in a ten-thousand-fold measure. Without the Spirit of God, we are like a ship stranded on the beach; when the tide has receded, there is no moving her until the flood shall once again lift her from the sands. We are like that frozen ship, of which we read the other day, frost-bound in the far-off Arctic Sea; until the Spirit of God shall thaw the chilly coldness of our natural estate, and bid the life-floods of our heart flow forth, there we must lie, cold, cheerless, lifeless, and powerless. The Christian, like the mariner, depends upon the breath of heaven, or his ship is without motion. We are like the plants of the field, and this genial season suggests the metaphor—all the winter through vegetation sleeps wrapped up in her frost garments, but when the mysterious influence of spring is felt, she unbinds her cloak to put on her vest of many colors, while every bud begins to swell and each flower to open. And so a church lies asleep in a long and dreary winter until God the Holy Spirit loosens the bands of lethargy, and hearts bud and blossom, and the time of the singing of birds is come. This doctrine has been preached hundreds of times, and we all know it, but for all that, we all forget it; and especially when we are in earnest about our work, and perceive our personal responsibility, there is no truth of God that needs to be insisted upon more thoroughly than this, "Without Me, you can do nothing." Until we are utterly empty of self, we are not ready to be filled by God; until we are conscious of our own weakness, we are not fit platforms for the display of the divine omnipotence. Until the arm of flesh is paralyzed, and death is written upon the whole natural man, we are not ready to be endowed with the divine life and energy.

II. We now proceed to note OUR DUTY as the prophet tells it to us.

The prophet did not tell the kings that they were to procure the water—that, as we have already said, was out of their power—but he did say, "Make this valley full of ditches," that when the water came there might be reservoirs to contain it. They who pass "through the valley of Baca are to make it a well"—that is *their* business. "The rain also fills the pools"—that is *God's* business. If we expect to obtain the Holy Spirit's blessing, we must *prepare for His reception.* "Make this valley full of trenches" is an order which is given me this morning for the members of

this church; make ready for the Holy Spirit's power; be prepared to receive that which He is about to give; each man in his place and each woman in her sphere, make the whole of this church full of trenches for the reception of the divine floods. Before the Nile begins to rise, you see the Egyptians from either side of the banks making ready first the deep channel, and then the large reservoir, and afterwards the small canals, and then the minor pools, for unless these are ready the rising of the Nile will be of little value for the irrigation of the crops in future months; but when the Nile rises, then the water is received and made use of to fertilize the fields; and so, when the treasury of the Spirit is open by His powerful operations, each one of us should have his trench ready to receive the blessed flood which is not always at its height. Have you ever noticed the traders by the river's side? If they expect a barge of coals, or a vessel laden with other freight, the wharf is cleared to receive it. Have you not noticed the farmer just before the harvest-time—how the barn is emptied, or the brick yard is made ready for the stacks? Men will, when they expect a thing, prepare for the reception of it; and, if they expect more than usual, they say, "I will pull down my barns and build greater, that I may have where to bestow my goods." The text says to us, *"Prepare for the Spirit of God."* Do not pray for it, and then fold your arms and say, "Well, *perhaps* He will work." We ought to act as though we were *certain* He would work mightily—we must *prepare in faith*. Have you ever read that text, "Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of yours habitations: spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes"? What for? "For you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left." You are to enlarge your tent first, and then God will send those that will fill it. But the most of people say, "Well, you know, of course, if God sends a blessing, we must then enlarge."

Yes, that is the way of unbelief, and the road to the curse. But the way of faith and the road to the *blessing* is this—God has promised it; we will get ready for it; God is engaged to bless, now let us be prepared to receive the blessing. Act not on the mere strength of what you have, but in expectation of that which you have asked. Act for God on the faith of what He *will* give, rather than on the faith of what you have as yet obtained. Count God's notes of hand as cash; believe that, with God, a promise is as good as the fulfillment, and act when you have the promise as you would have acted if you had already seen the promise fulfilled!

Prepare for a blessing! *Prepare largely!* "Make this valley *full* of ditches," not make *one* trench, but as many as possible. For God, when He works, works like a God. As a king gives not stintedly, like a beggar, so God, in His gifts, is not restrained. Giving will not impoverish Him, and withholding will not enrich Him. Expect great things from a great God! "Make this valley full of ditches." Have a holy covetousness of the divine blessing. Never be satisfied with what God is doing in the conversion of souls; be grateful, but hunger after more. If He give ten souls, ask for a hundred; if He give a hundred, ask for a thousand; if a thousand, ask for ten thousand. Insatiable as the grave ought the Christian's heart to be

with regard to the glory of God! Here we may swallow the horseleech indeed, and say, "Give, give, give," with greater vehemence every day, and yet shall not God chide us for the largeness or the importunity of our desires. Open your mouth wide, for God will fill it. "Make this valley full of ditches."

Moreover, *prepare at once*—not dig trenches in a month's time, but "make this valley full of ditches" *now*. Oh, that little word *"now!"* it is often the saving word to sinners, and to the Christian it is the quickening word. Tomorrow! Who shall tell how many souls it has destroyed, devouring them as the grave devours the slain! Alas, for the mischiefs of that demon word, *tomorrow*. And who shall say how many Christian churches have been deprived of blessed enlargements by the policy which said, "Wait a little!" Away with this horrible advice! Wait? Impossible! Death waits not! Hell makes no pause! Sin stays not its mad career! If the devil, and death, and hell would wait, we might have an excuse for loitering; but, meanwhile, "Forward!" must be our motto. Now, even now, my brothers and sisters, prepare for the blessing, for God is ready to give it when we are ready to receive it. When the valley is full of ditches, the ditches shall be filled: when the wells are made in the valley of Baca, then shall the pools be filled.

Furthermore, *prepare actively*. Ditch-making is laborious work; God is not to be served by child's play, or sham work with no toil in it. When a valley is to be trenched throughout its whole length, all the host must give themselves to the effort, and none must shy from the toil. I believe with all my heart in the Spirit of God; but I do not believe in human idleness. Celestial power uses human *effort*. The Spirit of God usually works most where *we* work most. With regard to our own salvation, the meritorious part of that is finished for us; but still it is written, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" and the reason given is, "For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." We work because God works; to loiter because God works is evil reasoning. Do not tell me that because God will fulfill His own purposes, therefore His people may go to sleep; for it was never His purpose to lull His people to slumber; but His great design is the education of an intelligent host of co-workers with Himself. The Lord has made us and ordained us that we, in our measure, may work together with Him. It is His office to bless our efforts, but it is at once our privilege and our duty for each one of us to yield ourselves as the instruments of the divine purpose. I want every Christian here to feel that if the Lord is about to bless this church, or His church at large, there must be, on the part of every one of us, a shouldering of the spade, and a going forth to diligent, continuous, persevering service, in the name of the Master, according to His will. Give me a lazy church, and say nothing about the Spirit of God—the Spirit of God and lazy churches are a long way off from each other; but give me an earnest church and the Spirit of God, and who knows what may come of such a blessed union! Let but men be prepared to labor, and God is prepared to bless their labor, for is it not written, "Paul plants, and Apollos waters"—

and what happens?—"God gives the increase." He seldom denies the increase where there is a planting Paul and a watering Apollos. Earnest efforts and believing dependence upon God are sure to be attended with a blessing.

Let me, however, interpret these words, "Make this valley full of ditches," a little more plainly and pointedly. If we are to have a blessing from God, we are every one of us to have a trench ready to receive it. "Well, how shall I have mine ready?" one asks. My answer is, have large desires for a blessing—that is one trench you can all dig. Brothers and sisters, is it not true that some of you do not want a blessing? If the Lord should give you an unusual blessing, you would hardly thank Him—for you have never hungered and thirsted after it. There are some professors who do not want to be too thoroughly Christian; they are quite afraid of having too much of the Spirit of God; they are for ankle-deep religion; and they had rather not wade further into the stream lest they should be carried away by the current. It would be inconvenient to such persons to have much grace. Do not be afraid, you will not get it; in fact, it will be a question, before long, whether you have any at all. But if a true believer desires much grace, he shall have it. Enlarge, then, your desires, my brothers and sisters; ask for much likeness to your Master, much fellowship with your divine Lord; ask for great faith; ask for clear hope; ask for intelligent views of the truth of God; ask for a burning sense of the value of those truths. "Ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." Do not stint yourselves, but "make the valley *full* of trenches." If there is any attainment which has seemed to you up till now to be impossible, long after it. If it is any height of virtue, if it is any excellence of loveliness, or any eminence of grace, let your soul be enlarged. "I speak," says Paul, "as unto my children" (so may I speak to many among you), "be you also enlarged." "You are not straitened in the Lord, or in us, but you are straitened in your own heart." Make the valley of your soul as full as possible of the reservoirs of longing desire for a blessing.

Next, add to these desires, faithful, vehement, and constant *prayers*. "You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss." Make your heart full of prayer; and, my brothers and sisters you need not say that you have not subjects for supplication. If you have all you need yourselves, pray for others. Go to God for your children's salvation. Oh, that our children might be God's children! They counted the family of Curio happy, of old, because there were three orators in it, the grandsire, the father, and his son; but that is a far happier family where there are three generations of Christians; when the promise is made true, "Instead of the father, shall rise up the children"—when the holy cause descends as an heirloom from the father to the son, and from the son to the next generation, and the next! Pray for this, and be not content without it. Then plead for your servants, your kinsfolk, and your neighbors. Set your heart upon special cases; yearn over those cases; and when you see those converted, long after more, and make your valley full of new trenches, for this is a day of

grace, an hour of blessing, and the Lord will give you according to your faith.

Furthermore, if desires and prayers are good, yet activity is even more so. Every Christian who wants to have a blessing for himself or for others, must set to work by active exertion, for this is the word, "Make this valley full of ditches." If you cannot dig a deep trench, dig a shallow one; and if it cannot be as broad as you wish, let it be as wide as you can make it. I mean this—some of you young men might preach—you have the ability, you have the time for study; I want you to lay out your talents in that holiest of enterprises—in the street corners, anywhere, proclaim Christ. Some of you ought to be teaching in Sunday schools, but you are putting that talent aside; it is rusting, it is spoiling, and you will have no interest to bring to your Master for it. I want that Sunday school talent to be used; I long to see the Sunday school trench deepened and lengthened by everyone doing his share! Many of you might do good service by teaching senior classes at your own houses. This work might be most profitably extended. If our intelligent Christian brothers and matrons would try to raise little classes of six, eight, ten, or 12 at home, I know not what good might come of it. You would not be interfering with anyone else, for in such a city as this, we may all work as hard as we will, and there is no chance of interfering with each other's labors. This sea is too large here for us to be afraid of other folks running away with our fish. I want to see our whole system of trenches enlarged. Some, of you, perhaps, will do best in tract distribution—well, do it—keep it up; but mind there is something in the tract—and that is not always the case—mind there is something worth reading which will be of use when read. Do not give away tracts which are more likely to send the readers to sleep than to prayer. Some of them might be useful to physicians, when they cannot get their patients to sleep by any other means. Get something useful, interesting, telling, Scriptural, and give it away largely out of love to Jesus; and if these labors do not suit your taste, talk personally to individuals. Christ at the well! What a schoolmaster for us! Talk to the one woman, the one child, the one butler, and the one laborer, whoever he may be. He who makes one blade of grass grow that would not otherwise have grown, is a benefactor to his race; and he who scatters one good thought which would not otherwise have been disseminated—has done something for the kingdom of Christ. I cannot tell you what is most fit for everybody to do, but if your heart is right, there is something for each one.

There are so many niches in the temple, and so many statues of living stone to fill those niches to make it a complete temple of heavenly architecture. You and I must each find our own niche. Remember, Christian, your time is going. Do not be considering always what you ought to do, but *get to work;* shut your eyes and put your hands out, and "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." The very first Christian effort will do, only do it with all your might; do it in the name and strength of God. "Make this valley full of ditches." I would ask God to make this church full of workers, to turn out the drones and multiply the

bees. We do not want drones here! We want only those who will bring their share of honey to the common hives—I mean their share of glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are not saved, we will long for your salvation, and be glad that you come among us, and hope that God will bless you; but if you are a church member, and do nothing, the Lord have mercy upon your miserable soul!

One thing more and I leave this point. With all the work that the church does in making the valley full of ditches, we must take care that we do it in a spirit of holy confidence and faith. These ditches were to be dug not because the water *might* come, but because they were *sure* it would come. So we must work for Christ, not because we *may* win souls, but because we *must*. A minister was asked to what point he reached in his faith when he was preaching; he said he prayed, and he *hoped* God would bless the word, and God did bless the word in a measure, according to his faith. But there was another whose conversions were about 10 times as numerous in one month as the other good man's in a year, and when he was asked in what style he preached, whether he hoped he would have a blessing, he said, "No, I do not hope anything about it; when I go into the pulpit, I am sure of being blessed, because I am preaching God's word, and have in faith sought His help." Preaching in faith is sure to be honored of God, and all Christian work ought to be done in the spirit of confidence. Who are the soldiers who win a battle? Not those who walk to the fight half afraid of defeat, but those men who are like the English trumpeter who could sound a charge, but had never learned to sound a retreat. Those are true Christians who do not know how to be beaten, who cannot doubt God's promise, who do not understand how the gospel can be preached in vain, who do not know how it is possible that Jesus Christ, with His omnipotence, can fail to see of the travail of His soul, but who believe that "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand," and who expect Jehovah to follow with a divine result that which is done to His glory. Oh, to dig ditches with the confidence that God, who bade us dig them, will be quite sure to fill them! This is faith's true place, may we not be slow to occupy it.

III. Thirdly, a few words about the DIVINE OPERATIONS.

Observe, my brothers and sisters, how sovereign the operations of God are. When Elijah wanted rain, there was a cloud seen, and he heard a sound as of abundance of rain, and by-and-by the water descended in floods. But when God would send the water to Elisha, he heard no sound of rain, nor did a drop descend. I know not how it was that the trenches were filled. Whether down some deep ravine, the ancient bed of a dried up torrent, God made the mighty flood to return as He did along the bed of Kishon of old, I do not know, but by the way of Edom the waters came obedient to the divine Command. God is not tied to this or that mode or form. He may in one district work a revival, and persons may be stricken down, and made to cry aloud; but in another place there may be great crowds, and yet all may be still and quiet, as though no deep excitement existed at all. God blesses often by the open ministry, and frequently by

the personal and more secret action of His people. He *can* bless as He wills, and He *will* bless as He wills! Let us not dictate to God. Many a blessing has been lost by Christians not believing it to be a blessing because it did not come in the particular shape which they had conceived to be proper and right. To some the divine work is nothing, unless it assumes the form which their prejudice has selected. Oh, be thankful if it comes! I have been greatly rejoiced at some of the conversions at the Agricultural Hall. I hoped to have heard of many who never went to a place of worship getting a blessing; I dare say we shall hear of them, but curiously enough, the most of those I have heard of, are those who have been here before, or who have been regular attendants elsewhere for years. I did not go abroad to look after my own children, but it is very odd—they say if you want to know something about your own house, you must go away from home; and so, I suppose, in order to be the means of conversion of some of you, it is necessary that I go afield.

Well, so long as God sends blessing, it is not for you or I to have any choice about it. Perhaps if I pray for my own children, He may bless somebody else's children. If I am seeking the good of a child perhaps that may be blessed to an old man, for many a sermon to the young has been made useful to the old. I do not know that prayer does always fall in the same place from which it ascends. Prayer is like a cloud rising from the earth, sure to come back again in rain, but not always bound to return to the same spot. Many of you are praying for a husband or a wife—God has never blessed your husband or wife, but He has remembered others out of regard to your prayer; and, when you come to heaven, you will be content so long as your prayer was answered. Be thankful for revival, brothers and sisters, but do not set up your will as to how it shall come. "You shall not see wind, neither shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water."

Notice, next, that as the blessing comes sovereignly, so it comes *sufficiently*—there was enough for all the men, for all the cattle, and all the beasts. They might drink as they would, but there was quite enough for all. Let us wait then in prayer upon God, and prepare to be heard, for God has great floods of grace to give according to His riches in glory; by Christ Jesus will He deal out large things to those whose faith is large.

Observe, that this flood came *very soon,* for the Lord is a punctual paymaster. Moreover, it came certainly—there was no mistaking it, no doubting it; and so shall God's blessing wait upon the earnest prayers and faithful endeavors of Christian people—a blessing such as the greatest skeptic shall not be able to deny, such as shall make the eyes of timidity to water, while he says to himself, "Who has begotten me these?" You have only to look up *to* God and *work* for God, and you shall have such a blessing as shall make you wonder at it. Did you notice the word "Behold" in one of the verses following my text? It is a hint that the whole hosts were amazed at it. God will amaze His church with what He will bestow, if they only have the confidence to act as though they believed

His promise, and could not think that He would be less gracious than His Word.

Thus I have spoken to you about your duty and about the divine mode of operation. Brothers and sisters, we *must* have the blessing in this particular church—it would be enough to break one's heart even to suppose it possible that we should not. God knows with what earnest desires and endeavors I went to the Agricultural Hall to preach the gospel, and with how simple and sincere a motive you went there, too—we certainly did not journey so far for our own comfort, but for the honor and glory of our Master. And God's word *must* be followed with a blessing. "Thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place, for we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them who are saved, and in them who perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life." But I cannot and will not harbor a mistrustful suspicion about the blessing of God resting upon that action, and knowing, as I do, that many of you are really solemnly in earnest with an apostolic earnestness. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but I am certain God will not withhold the dew, nor keep back the rain; for He never did say to His people, "Seek you My face" in vain. Zion has not conceived the wind, nor shall she bring forth a dream. As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth children. The earnest agony of a living church must bring forth fruit unto God, or else the Bible is no longer reliable, and the promise of God no longer sure. But He changes not, and therefore we will look for the blessing, knowing that it must come!

IV. Lastly, the Lord bade His servant tell them that not only should there be water, but he said, "This is but a light thing in the sight of God. He will deliver the Moabites also into your hand." GREATER THINGS are behind, and are to be expected. If the universal Christian church were prepared for a blessing, God would not only give to it a revival in its own border, but make short work, by its means, of all His enemies. At the present moment the Moabites are exceedingly bold, they invade us on all sides; especially do they prevail in the form of Romanists, sneaking into a Protestant church that they may be fed upon the fat of the land. Ah, my brothers and sisters, a revived church will soon make short work of Puseyism. Let the church of God be cold, and dead, and powerless, and Popery will soon spread. Look at Holland. Thirty or 40 years ago how little there was of Romanism in that fine old Protestant country, and now, because philosophy and rationalism have entered into so many of the pulpits, and put away the gospel, Romanists have multiplied like the grass of the field! But only give us the old-fashioned gospel which they used to preach under the "Gospel Oak," and out in the open fields, where thousands flocked to hear it; only give us the truth as it is in Jesus, and as Samson tore the lion, so would the church tear heresy in pieces! Behold, the evil of the day shall disappear as a moment's foam melts back into the wave that bears it, if Jehovah does but visit us. These forgers of lies are but of yesterday, and a thing of nothing; their doctrines are the

baseless fabric of a vision, without even reason, much less Scripture, to back them up! No, let Israel dig the trenches, and the swords of her warriors will soon find out the hearts of Moab's mightiest one. So with sin, there is no way of putting down sin except by getting the church of God revived. I am ashamed of some Christians, because they have so much dependence upon Parliament and the law of the land. Much good may Parliament ever do to true religion except by mistake. As to getting the law of the land to touch our religion, we earnestly cry, "Hands off! Leave us alone!" Your Sunday bills and all other forms of acts-of-Parliament-religion seem to me to be all wrong. Give us a fair field and no favor, and our faith has no cause to fear. Christ needs no help from Caesar. Let our members of Parliament repent of the bribery and corruption so rife in their own midst before they set up to be protectors of the *religion* of our Lord Jesus. I would be afraid to borrow help from government; it would look to me as if I rested on an arm of flesh instead of depending on the living God. Let the Lord's day be respected by all means, and may the day soon come when every shop shall be closed on Sunday; but let it be by the force of conviction and not by force of the policeman; let true religion triumph by the power of God in men's hearts, and not by the power of fines and punishments. Oh, for more dependence upon the living God, and less reliance upon an arm of flesh, and we shall see yet greater victories won by King Jesus!

So, my brothers and sisters, let us dig the trenches and continue to ask God to send us the water; and as for the Moabites out yonder, whatever shape the sin may take; let us depend upon it, the church of God is enough, through the power of God who dwells in her, to put down sin, and win the kingdom for Christ! I would to God that some here who belong to the Moabites, I mean you unconverted people, might be brought to know the Savior! Some of you know the way well enough, but need the will to run in it. O may the Spirit of God give you that will! A simple trust in Jesus will save you; God grant it to you! After faith, you shall work out of love to Jesus; but all your works *before* you trust in Him will do no good. Come to Him, trust in Him; make your heart this morning full of trenches, full of great desires, longings and prayers! If so, God will fill your soul, for He hears the humble, and despises not their tears. May God bless you, one and all. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Psa 132; 2 Kings 3:1-20.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

SELF-HUMBLING
NO. 748

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 5, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God, when you heard His words against this place, and against the inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard you, says the Lord."
2 Chronicles 34:27.

JOSIAH was very earnestly engaged in a devout work for God—he was cleansing, beautifying, and repairing the temple at Jerusalem. While this was being done, a copy of the book of the law being found, it was carried to the king, and the king at once diligently read it. While reading it he discovered certain terrible penalties threatened to idolaters and other offenders; and, knowing that his subjects had for successive years been guilty of the offenses thus condemned, he felt persuaded that the righteous judgments of God would come upon them. Greatly alarmed, though himself personally innocent of the guilt, he tore his clothes, wept, and humbled himself before the Most High. Now, it seemed a strange thing, did it not, that so good a man, personally clear from blame, engaged in one of the holiest of works with a sincere heart devoting himself to the cause of his God, should meet with so sad and depressive a discovery just in the very midst of his prosperous labors! Was there not another time that the law could have been sent to him with its condemning power? Were there not other offenders far more grossly erring than he, who might have been humbled? Why need this king, with his large, royal, tender heart, all consecrated to God, to be set a weeping, and to be made to go softly in the bitterness of his soul just in the very moment of enthusiastic and successful labor? I take it that the reason was this—God had much love towards Josiah, and, having honored him to rebuild the temple, He knew the natural tendency of the human heart to pride, and therefore, with a holy jealousy for one whom He loved so well, He sent him this discovery of the book of the law to keep him humble at the time when otherwise he might have been exposed to peril by the lifting up of his heart. You remember, beloved friends, the case of Hezekiah, when God raised him up from the sick bed. It is said he rendered not recompense to God according to the benefit received, for his heart was lifted up within him; and then God sent him a message by the prophet to tell him that the treasures of his house would be carried away into Babylon, and his sons would be captives to serve the king of Babylon—thus the Lord administered a check after the sin had broken out. But in the case before

us, the Lord preferred a preventive to a cure, and sent a check before the mischief had occurred, and so the holy worker became also the humble penitent—and there was blended in the life of Josiah, like the blending of the drops of rain with the gleams of sunlight, a fair rainbow of many virtues; for you see him toiling for his Lord with all his might, and yet bowing himself in dust and ashes, as an humble suppliant before the throne of heavenly grace. Learn from this, that you and I in the midst of a career of success from God, when our heart is most pure and most right, must not therefore expect that all things will go smoothly, but may rather for that very reason expect to experience humiliating circumstances. Like Paul, when favored with an abundance of revelations, we may expect a "thorn in the flesh," lest we should be exalted above measure. Disclosures of our own weakness and sinfulness are often made to us at the very time when God is honoring us most. In order that our vessel may be able to endure a strong and fair wind of divine favor, the Lord in infinite wisdom causes us to be burdened with grief or trial.

This morning I cannot enter into the whole of my text, but I shall ask your attention to Josiah's humbling himself. In this matter we shall note, first, *the acceptable act;* secondly, *the powerful reasons which exist for our imitating it;* and, thirdly, *the encouraging results which followed*—some of them are clear in his case, and others we may expect in our own.

I. First, we have to speak upon THE ACCEPTABLE ACT which Josiah performed; I say an *act*, not a *grace* or a *state*. It is not said that Josiah was humble. He *was* so, or he would not have trembled at God's word.

All graces are in all Christians in a measure. In every Christian there is the germ of every virtue. Just as in every well-formed child there is every muscle and sinew, and nerve and bone, although all are far from being developed, yet they are there; so in each Christian there exists humility, with all the kindred graces, though it is as yet in some scarcely perceptible, and in others is far removed from perfection. Josiah certainly possessed the grace of humility. It is not said that his soul was in a state of habitual humility, although he ought to have been. We ought always to be, in a certain sense, in the valley of humiliation. Pride is never to be excused in the believer. There is never a moment when we may safely be lifted up. Always lowly should we be in our own esteem. He who thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, deceives himself; and as we are always nothing in ourselves, it would be well for us to know and to feel this, and not to be self-deceived, or lay a flattering unction to our hearts. What is mentioned in the text is *an act,* not a grace, not a state, but an act. We have before us the grace of humility in Josiah, acting after its own nature to produce the state of humility in his soul. He humbled himself, that is, he set to work to cure himself of any remaining pride, and to educate in himself the humility which the grace of God had worked in him. He humbled himself; he confessed his share in the sin which God condemned; he acknowledged on his own part the justice of God in threatening such punishments; he stripped himself of his royal

array; he made no mention of services which he had rendered to God in the temple; he mentioned not his own generosity in having given of his treasures to the decorations of the house of the Lord; but he came as that poor publican is described as coming in our Lord's famous parable, not "daring to lift so much as his eyes towards heaven, but smiting upon his breast, and crying, God be merciful to me a sinner." And so, brothers and sisters, I want you, this morning not so much to inquire whether you have humility, for I know that if you are believers, humility is somewhere in your heart; I do not ask you whether you are in an humble state this morning, it may be you are not; but I want you to accompany me in an act of humiliation, in the bowing of your souls before the Lord—each man and each woman, according to the experience of each, bowing low and reverently before the Majesty of the Most High, that we may obtain from God the mercies which each of us may need.

1. Concerning this action, then, I have to mention, in the first place, that it was *a real and personal act.* The text says, "Because your heart was tender, and you did humble yourself." You did not *talk* about humbling yourself, but you *did* humble yourself. You did not *bid others* do it, but you did humble *yourself*. It became to you a personal matter of obligation, and you did not postpone that obligation, or look at it, and commend it, and say, "When I have a more convenient season, I will send for you;" but you did humble yourself, really, sincerely, truly, and in very deed; you did, in your own proper person, bow yourself to the very dust before the Most High." Brothers and sisters, I fear lest the habit of preaching to you may lead me to forget my personal share in this and other holy exercises. I pray God it may not! And on the other hand, it is possible that you may criticize the style in which I address you, and so may forget that my style is not the business in hand. We are now to have respect to a very solemn obligation of which our text reminds us. I pray you let us come honestly to the work, and may God's Holy Spirit help us, and may each one here be willing now to have it said of him, "You did humble yourself."

2. Observe, too, that as the work was real and personal, so it was *voluntary*. "You did humble yourself." It is not said that God humbled him, by which it is not implied that the grace of God did not assist him, that the Spirit of God was not the author of his humility, but it is implied that God did not by any overt and open judgment of providence cause Josiah to be humbled. Have you ever noticed the difference between being humble and being humbled? Many persons are humbled who are not humble at all. Pharaoh was humbled, oh, how humbled, when he saw that even the flies and lice could vanquish both himself and his men-at-arms! How humbled was he when he found that the God of heaven could send plague after plague upon him, and make the proud lips that said, "Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice?" cry, "Entreat the Lord that there be no more mighty thundering and hail!" He must have been humbled, but he was not humble. And when the cold waters rolled over him

in the Red Sea, he died with a proud spirit, but he had been humiliated to the last degree. Even so, God may humble some of us; He may take away our property, and we may be humbled by being poor; He may be pleased to strip us of that which is now the object of our boasting, and we may be humbled by its loss. But the duty to which I call you this morning is that of humbling yourselves before judgment comes to deal with you, as, mark you, it surely will unless you attend to the gracious precept, and humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. We must all either break or bow. Let us bow cheerfully. "Let us kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and we perish from the way." It is a voluntary humiliation of soul which is advocated by the example of Josiah, and may the Spirit of God make us willing in the day of His power, that we may willingly humble ourselves before God.

3. It was, moreover, *a sincerely devout act* on the part of Josiah. He humbled himself, we are told, "before God." It is true he did put on sackcloth, and tear his clothes, and so far his humiliation was apparent to men, but the soul of his humbling was before God alone. It is vain to put on sackcloth, and to bow your head like a bulrush before man, unless your heart abases itself before God. Outward mourning and fasting are not humiliation; neither does God care for them if the heart is absent. "Tear your hearts, and not your garments." Let your souls be humbled and your spirits contrite. Dear friends, we need more and more to walk in our religion before God. Away with that holiness which consists in respect to the forms and customs of society! Away with that religion which flaunts itself before the staring eyes of a fellow mortal! We need that divine grace which has respect to the God who sees in secret; we need more and more, in fact, of spiritual worship, for they who worship God the Spirit must "worship Him in spirit and in truth." Your hymns are no songs of praise unless they are sung unto God; your prayers are no prayers unless you seek the face of the God of Israel; and your humbling is nothing but another form of pride unless your souls have a reverent and deep respect unto the Lord.

4. Once again, the act on the part of Josiah was *a very deep and thorough one.* He did not *try* to humble himself, but he *did* it. This I gather from the repetition of the fact in the text. Where Inspiration mentions a thing twice, it is because God would have our notice drawn to it. It is written, "You did humble yourself before God;" and again, "and humbled yourself before Me." It was not garment-tearing merely, it was heart-breaking. Josiah was really broken in heart. He did not struggle to get himself down where he should be, he was down; at the foot of the mercy seat he cast himself as a true broken-hearted penitent. Beloved, it is an easy thing to say, "I would be humble," but to be humble before God is another thing; and to begin the sacred work of humiliation before the Most High is no great thing, but to continue in it until at last you can say, "Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O God"—this is a blessed work, and you need the assistance of the Spirit of God in it. We are all at

certain times conscious of our weakness, but we forget the humbling fact; our humility is like the morning cloud and the early dew which passes away; but to have this worked into the spirit till the whole heart becomes thoroughly self-mortified, and pride is excluded and shut out, this it is that we need, and this it is that will win the blessing.

Beloved friends, let me say to you that the grace of humility, of which I spoke in the first place, is exceedingly sweet before God, and where it does not exist, a man cannot humble himself. Let me also remark that the state of humility is much more blessed than the mere act of humiliation, and should be the condition of every Christian at all times. We ought always to walk humbly before the Lord; but if we are not in the state of humility, we must exercise the act of humility in order to bring us into it. We ought always to be clean; but as we are not always so, through contact with this evil world, there must be a time for cleansing: so we ought to be always humble; but as we are not so, there must be a time for humbling ourselves. Now, let no man or woman in this place be exempt from the work before us, for here is a king, an eminent person, and yet he humbles himself! Sons of the earth, will not you do the same? Here is one engaged in the greatest of works, yet he humbles himself! Let no pastor, no minister, no elder, no deacon, let no earnest Evangelist, let no successful laborer, as a private Christian, fancy himself excused. Josiah bowed, who dares stand erect? Let each heart in its own place bow before the Most High. Here is one who was pure in his life, who feared God and died in the act of fulfilling his treaty with his Eastern allies, and defending his country against the tyrant Pharaoh-Necho, who sought to keep him from the battle by pretending to have been sent by God. He lived as a saint, and died as a patriot king might wish to die, and yet he humbles himself before the Most High! O friends, do not we perceive that this example demands of us immediate imitation? The Lord lead us into it!

II. Grant me your earnest attention while I give a few POWERFUL REASONS why we should perform the same act as this, which is recorded of Hezekiah.

1. My brothers and sisters, reasons for humbling ourselves are more abundant than the time allowed me in which to urge them upon you. In the first place, *a deep sense and clear sight of sin, its heinousness, and the punishment which it deserves,* should make us lie low before the throne of God. We have sinned; *we,* we have erred and strayed from His ways like lost sheep—*we* who are now present. We have sinned as Christians. Alas that it should be so! Favored as we have been, we have yet been ungrateful; privileged beyond most, we have not brought forth fruit in proportion. Who among us, though he may long have been engaged in the Christian warfare, will not blush when he looks back upon the past? As for our days before we were regenerate, may God blot them out—may they be forgiven and forgotten. But since then, though we have not sinned as before, yet there has been this peculiar aggravation of our sins

that we have sinned against the light of God and against His love—light which has really penetrated our minds, and love which we have been able to recognize, and in which we have rejoiced. Oh, the atrocity of the sin of a pardoned soul! An unpardoned sinner sins, to my mind, cheaply, compared with the sin of one of God's own elect, who has had communion with Christ and leaned his head upon Jesus' bosom. Look, brothers and sisters, at David! Many will talk of his sin, but I pray you look at his repentance, and hear his broken bones, as each one of them moans out its heart-rending confession! Mark his tears, as they fall upon the ground, and the deep sighs with which he accompanies the softened music of his harp! We have erred: let us, therefore, seek the spirit of penitence. Look, again, at Peter! We speak much of Peter's denying his Master. Remember, it is written, "He wept bitterly." Have *we* no such offenses to weep over? Are there no denials of our Lord to be lamented with tears? Think, brothers and sisters, these sins of ours deserve nothing less than the hottest hell; these sins of ours, before and after conversion, would consign us to the place of inextinguishable fire, if it were not for the sovereign mercy which has made us to differ, snatching us like brands from the burning. Is there no help here towards the work of soul-humbling? My soul, bow down under a sense of your natural filthiness, and worship your God.

2. Let us reflect upon another humbling subject—*our origin and our end.* Here are we, the offspring of a day; unclean things brought out of an unclean thing; children that are corrupters; the seed of evildoers; what are we at the best but mere animated earth? And before long we shall be brought into that lowly bed where the worms shall be under us, and the worms shall cover us; we shall become a puff of wind, a handful of brown dust—and shall we boast? We who sprang from nothing, and must go back to nothing, shall we boast in ourselves? O worm of the dust, know yourself, and cease from pride!

3. I would remind you also, my dear brothers and sisters, of that *sovereign grace* which has made us to differ. I frequently find that a sense of God's amazing love to me has a greater tendency to humble me than even a consciousness of my own guilt. Think, my brothers and sisters, what you are by grace! You were chosen of God according to His purpose; chosen, not for good in you, but chosen because *He* would choose you; because, "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion." You were "not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold…but with the precious blood of Christ." You were so lost that nothing could save you but the sacrifice of God's only-begotten Son. Think of that; and, as Jesus stooped for you, bow yourselves in lowliness at His feet. You are now a child of God; a favorite of the skies, on the road to glory, with a heritage beyond the black river which shall be yours when suns and moons have paled their waning light. You are to dwell forever near to God, and to be like He. Surely the thoughts of such amazing goodness will make the vessel, laden so

heavily with God's mercy, sink in the water, even to its bulwarks. Surely you will feel that you must bless and magnify God, because you are less than the least of all His Mercies.

4. Further, let me ask you to think of *the greatness of God.* It is not in my power by words to bring before you that tremendous subject; but if I could put you in the position of Job, when he said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You," you would be certain to add with that patriarch, "Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."—

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

5. Once more, think of *the life and death of the Savior.* See your Master taking a towel and washing His disciples' feet; and, follower of Christ, will you not humble yourself; no, see Him all His life long. Is not this sentence the summary of His biography—"He humbled Himself"? Was He not here on earth always stripping—taking off first one robe of honor and then another, till, naked, He was fastened to the cross, and then emptied out His inmost self, pouring out the floods of His life-blood from His heart, and giving up all for us, till they laid Him penniless in a borrowed grave?—

"His honor and His breath
Were taken both away,
Joined with the wicked in His death,
And made as vile as they."

How low was our dear Redeemer brought! How then can we be proud? Stand, my beloved brothers and sisters, at the foot of the cross, and count the purple drops by which you have been cleansed; see the crown of thorns; mark still the relics of the spit on those blessed cheeks; go round the cross and mark His scourged shoulders, still gushing with encrimsoned rivers; see hands and feet given up to the rough iron, and His whole self to mockery and scorn; see the bitterness, and the pangs, and the throes of inward grief, showing themselves in His outward frame; hear the shrill shriek, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" and if you do not lie prostrate on the ground before that cross, you have never seen it; if you are not humbled in the presence of Jesus, you do not know Him. I pray the Lord bring us in contemplation to Calvary, and I know our position will no longer be that of the inflated, pompous man or woman of pride, but we shall take the humble place of one who loves much, because much has been forgiven us.

I would, however, warn the inexperienced believer concerning this act of humbling—*do not make mistakes about it.* Do not mistake sham humility for real humility. There is a cant of humility which is infamous. People will say in prayer, "Your poor dust," and use all sorts of depreciating expressions when they are as proud as Lucifer; they will say before the Lord things concerning themselves which they are very far from believing, for from their manner and bearing, it is clear that their estimate of themselves is far from being too low. There are others who think that

laziness is humility; they cry, "Oh, I could not do this! I could not do the other!" when they might do it, and should do it, and ought to do it, and could do it, God the Holy Spirit helping them; but they shirk every duty because they have a sense of inability, and they cover their idleness with the mantle of supposed humility. Moses was rebuked by God very strongly when he made excuses, and would gladly have avoided going into the great work to which the Lord had called him. Let us not raise questions with our God when He calls us to labor, but let us say, "Here I am, send me." Do not fall into that miserable counterfeit humility, but like men, use all your strength for Jesus. Again, do not mistake unbelief for humility. "I hope I am," "I trust I am," and expressions of that kind, savor far more of distrust of God than of humility of spirit, for the best form of humility is compatible with the highest degree of faith. In fact, that is not true faith, but spurious, which is not humble; and that is not genuine humility of the loveliest type which is not confident in God. Faith and humility should always walk together. Let the grace in you be real grace, and to that end ask the Spirit of God to work it in you.

Let me add, dear friend, if you find it difficult to humble yourself before God, stand to it the more earnestly, for the more difficult it is, the more you need it. If your soul were humble, it would easily humble itself; but because it is proud, it needs humbling; and for this reason it finds the duty irksome and displeasing to the flesh. Mortify your pride, my brothers and sisters; let your souls be mortified on account of sin; and if you cannot yourself do it, you know where your strength lies, fly to your Master for strength, and you shall have enabling grace!

Again, let me say, in order to humble yourselves, exercise all your faculties. Let your memory bring before you your past offenses. Let your understanding form a proper judgment of your position as a creature, as a sinner, and now as a dependent servant. Your understanding will greatly help you, for true humility is forming a just estimate of oneself, and to humble oneself is to bring oneself down to the place where one ought to be. Let your hopes and your fears, let your affections and your passions, let all the powers of your intellect and heart agree to this—that now before God you will humble yourself as Josiah did. I have given you the reasons. May God apply those reasons with power by His Holy Spirit!

III. Lastly, I have to encourage our friends to this duty by ENCOURAGING RESULTS.

I think it was Bernard, or one of the preachers of the middle ages, who said, "There is one thing to be said for humility, that it can never, by any possibility, do one harm." If a man goes through a door, and he has the habit of stooping his head, it may be the door is so high there is no need for stooping, but the stooping is no injury to him; but if the door should happen to be a low one, and he has the habit of holding up his head, he may come into sharp contact with the top of the door. True humility is a flower which will adorn any garden. This is a sauce with which you may season every dish of life, and you will find an improvement in every case.

Whether it is prayer or praise, whether it is work or suffering, the salt of humility cannot be used in excess.

1. But there are positive advantages connected with it, for, first, *humiliation will often turn away judgment.* How many times in the history of the Israelites, when they were given over to their enemies, their humbling themselves at once drove away the invaders, and set them free from the scourge! Perhaps some of the most remarkable cases which I can quote are those of wicked men, for their cases show the power of humiliation with God where there is nothing else to work upon Him. Rehoboam had set up a false worship, and "did evil in the sight of the Lord;" therefore God was provoked with Rehoboam and with Judah; and Shishak, the king of Egypt, came up and ravaged Judea, and was about to capture Jerusalem; but we read that Rehoboam and Judah humbled themselves before God, and the Lord said that Shishak should not touch Jerusalem, and moreover, the Lord visited the land with favor, and it is said, "also in Judah things went well." This mercy was granted, not because of any good thing in Rehoboam or his people, but only because they humbled themselves. A more remarkable case still is that of Ahab. Ahab had killed Naboth to obtain his vineyard; but when he entered that vineyard, stained with innocent blood, Elijah met him with the cutting question, "Have you killed, and also taken possession?" And Ahab's proud and haughty spirit was cowed with fear of Elijah, and he cried, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" Elijah delivered the terrible sentence of God to him, that the whole of his household would die, and that Jezebel would be eaten by dogs in that very vineyard. Ahab could no longer, after hearing that sentence, keep up his brazen countenance; but we read, "And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning." Then the Lord said unto Elijah, "Do you see how Ahab humbles himself before Me? Because he humbles himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days." So that this basest of all men, this wicked Ahab, whose name stands infamous in the Chronicles of the Kings, yet obtained a blessing from God when he humbled himself. As for God's people, when the Lord has been about to strike them, He has usually stayed His hands when they have humbled themselves. See the case of Hezekiah which we have already mentioned. Hezekiah humbled himself, it is said, because of the pride of his heart, and the Lord said this evil should not be brought upon him in his day. And Josiah, in this case, also turned aside the sword of the Lord from the Israel of his own day because he humbled himself. My dear friends, you are under the paternal discipline of God, and He will make you feel His chastening rod; but if you humble yourselves, you put the rod away. You know, with your own children, if you feel compelled to chasten, yet, when you see softness and tenderness of heart, and a sweet readiness to confess the fault, it goes against your heart that the rod should be used, and you put it away, for humble sorrow is all that you wanted to produce; and if the ef-

fect is there already, there is no need of further sternness. So the Lord turns away the chastisement from His people when they humble themselves.

2. Humiliation of soul always *brings a positive blessing with it.* The old philosophers were accustomed to assert, as a law of matter, "Nature abhors a vacuum." This old dictum is out of date nowadays; but, it is still true spiritually. So, then, if you and I empty ourselves, depend upon it, God will fill us. Divine grace seeks out and fills a vacuum. Make a vacuum by humility, and God will fill that vacuum by His love. He who desires sweet communion with Christ, should remember the words of the Lord, "To this man will I look, even to Him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word." "He has respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knows afar off." Stoop, my dear friend, if you would climb to heaven. Do we not say of Jesus, "He descended that He might ascend"? So must you. You must go downwards, that you may grow upwards; for the sweetest fellowship with heaven is to be had by humble souls, and by them alone. I believe that God will deny no blessing to a thoroughly humbled spirit. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," with all its riches and treasures. The whole treasury of God shall be made over by deed of gift to the soul which is humble enough to be able to receive it without growing proud because of it.

3. Further, my dear brothers and sisters, the act of humiliation will be very blessed to you and to me, because *it will improve our spiritual health.* To humiliate yourself is as necessary in this wicked world as it is for traveler's through African jungles to take, every now and then, a draught of quinine. The bitterness of humility is a tonic to the spirit. I know of no man who is so courageous before his fellow man as he that bows before his God. My knee shall bend to God and God alone; but if my knee never bends to God, you may depend upon it; it will soon be bending when I do not want it to do so—it will tremble before the face of man. If you fear God with a deep and powerful fear, you shall fear nobody else; you should be able to say before a fierce tyrant like Nebuchadnezzar, with the three holy children, "Be it known unto you, O king that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." The fear of God is the death of every other fear; like a mighty lion, it chases all other fears before it. Nothing makes a man so vigorous and strong, with the exception of faith, as humility; and even faith itself cannot be strong where humility is weak.

4. Once more, *usefulness will be promoted by humility.* There are some professors whom God cannot bless, because they would grow intolerably proud if they were blessed. I heard a dear brother say that he believed God blessed us all up to the full measure and extremity of what it was safe for Him to do, and I believe He does so. If you do not get a blessing, it is because it is not safe for you to have one. If our heavenly Father were to let you be successful in His holy war, you would run away with the crown yourself, and meeting with an enemy you would fall a victim,

and so you are kept low for your own safety. When a man is sincerely humble, and never ventures so much as to touch a grain of the praise, there is scarcely any limit to what God will do for him. Humility makes us ready to be blessed by the God of grace, and fits us to deal with our fellow men. Everybody gets as far as he can from a proud man. I confess myself I have a great pleasure in seeing proud men, when I can hardly discern them with a powerful telescope, nearer than this would be far less agreeable. We mind not how near we come to gentle and meek spirits, for these are company for angels. Proud spirits do not like to deal with great sinners. "Stand by, I am holier than you," is not the language for a man who would be useful. What do you think, would a Pharisee make a city missionary? Look at the fine gentleman, bloated with self-importance! What a useful preacher he would make, would he not? Send him after the poor fallen girls at midnight meetings! Better send a peacock! "Stand by, I am holier than you;" why, the man who feels thus is out of place in the service of God; he is more fit to play lackey to the world's vanities, than to talk of being a soldier of the cross. Just as the excess of pride disables, so an abundance of humility of spirit will fit you for any kind of Christian work to which the Holy Spirit may call you. Let us humble ourselves then, dear friends, that God may exalt us in due time by giving us to see the result of our work.

I know not how to plead any further, but I commend to the Holy Spirit for fulfillment. My deeply anxious desire for myself and for you, my brothers and sisters in the common faith, is that we may all be brought, like Josiah, to humble ourselves before God.

There is yet a word which I desire to speak to those who are not saved. I do not say to you, begin with humbling yourselves: your hope lies in Jesus Christ. "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." That is the gospel. Your salvation lies not in you but in Jesus. At the same time, an humble and a contrite spirit will be a very ready way of leading you to Christ, and therefore I beseech you cultivate this spirit. There is a story narrated in the classic history of Augustus Caesar, that a most troublesome pirate had destroyed many of the Roman vessels, and therefore Caesar, having hunted him in vain for some time, offered a reward of ten thousand talents for the pirate's head. Now the pirate, knowing the case to be hopeless, and perhaps somewhat relenting, came himself before Caesar, and laying his head down before him in the dust, he said, "Ten thousand talents! I have brought the pirate's head." Caesar looked at him with astonishment, and said, "You have trusted the generosity of Caesar, and no man shall trust that in vain. You are pardoned. Here are the 10,000 talents, too." Now, sinner, I would advise you to follow his example. Shrewd and sensible was that: be you as wise. God will have your head, no, your *soul;* but go yourself with it, submit yourself. After that evil May day in our English history, when the apprentices had done so much mischief by destroying the foreigners' houses and burning them, in a riot, a commission sat to try them, and a number of them

were summoned to the Guildhall; but when they appeared with ropes about their necks, confessing that they deserved to be hanged, a free pardon was accorded to very many of them.

Come, poor soul, the Lord will never swing you up if you will put the rope round your own neck! If you will bring your own head, He will never take it off your shoulders. Come just as you are, confess the wrong, and trust to the liberality of God in Jesus Christ, and you shall not find Him condemning! You proud ones who are self-righteous will perish, but you who are humble, by trusting in Jesus, shall be saved. Yonder is a sinking ship! The vessel is going down rapidly, and I see two men equally anxious for life. One of them puts on his garments, heavy with gold lace, loads himself with jewels, fills his pockets with his gold and his silver, and leaps into the sea. You know what will become of him—he has weighted himself for destruction. But here is another who takes off not only such jewelry as he may have upon him, but he strips himself even of his last rag, and then casts himself naked into the sea. If any man can swim, it is he. So you do the same, poor soul. If you have a rag of self-righteousness, off with it! If you have anything whatever of your own to depend upon, off with it! And if any man can swim in the sea of divine love, you are the man; and, let me add, a naked spirit was never drowned there. Lay hold on Jesus with nothing of your own in your hands, and "you shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck you out of His hands." May God bless these words to us all for His love's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 86.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE RIGHTEOUS HOLDING ON HIS WAY
NO. 749

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 12, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The righteous also shall hold on his way."
Job 17:9.

WE are thrice happy in having a goodly number of young beginners in our midst. Our springtide is cheered and beautified with many blossoms of hopeful converts. They have just begun to go on pilgrimage, and would be as happy as the birds of the air were it not that some of them are grievously afflicted with the fear that they shall not hold out to the end. This is one of their daily torments, that, after all, they shall be false to Christ; that the grace of God will fail them, or that they will fail to depend upon it; that, having begun well, they shall by-and-by be hindered, and shall not obey the truth of God. Now, perhaps a little plain conversation upon that subject may help to relieve them of their fears. Ignorance about divine truth is not bliss, and is not the friend to bliss—"that the soul without knowledge is not good." The more we know concerning the doctrines of the gospel the better for our comfort, if by faith we are able to receive them. Many and many a doubt and fear now oppressing the people of God might be driven like chaff before the wind, if they were but better established in the truths of God relating to the points under their consideration. If they did but know more fully what God has revealed they would tremble less at what Satan suggests. It is, therefore, with the view of very simply talking about this matter of holding on the way of the heavenly pilgrimage, that I have taken this text this morning. May God the Holy Spirit bless it to us.

First, we intend to say, this morning, that the believer must hold on his way—*it is necessary* that he should do so; secondly, *it is exceedingly difficult* for him to do so—the perseverance of the saints is surrounded with enormous perils; yet, thirdly, *this perseverance is guaranteed by divine promise;* but, fourthly, *it is only guaranteed to certain persons* whose character is described in the text as being "the righteous." These shall hold on their way.

I. First, then, it is absolutely essential to final salvation that we should be PARTICIPATORS IN FINAL PERSEVERANCE.

It has been said by some that he who once believes is therefore saved. I shall not deny the truth of that statement; but it is an unguarded mode of speech, and does not place the truth in the most Scriptural form. I would infinitely prefer to assert, that "He who truly believes, shall by divine grace continue to do so, and therefore shall be saved." For it is not true that, supposing a man did once believe, and then became altogether

an unbeliever he should be saved. If that were possible, that the believer should altogether fall from the grace of God, and become in all respects changed into an unbeliever, he would be damned; for on this point the word of God is very clear and decided; read the 24th verse of the 18th chapter of Ezekiel: "But when the righteous turns away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All his righteousness that he has done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he has trespassed, and in his sin that he has sinned, in them shall he die." If it were possible for one who had entered upon the way of righteousness—truly entered upon it—to turn from it, utterly and totally, the consequences will be his final destruction, for Paul tells us, "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame" (Heb 6:4-6). That is not the point we raise at all in the discussion of final perseverance. We do not admit the possibility of total apostasy in the case of the real believer in Jesus, but believe that he will hold on his way, and so be saved, but only saved by being enabled to hold on his way. We hold that in order to ultimate salvation, it is absolutely indispensable that everyone who is a believer should continue to be a believer; that he who is made by grace to be holy, should continue to be holy; that he in whom the divine life is placed, should never lose that divine life. It is the keeping of that life which we believe ultimately ends in perfection and everlasting bliss.

1. The necessity of final perseverance is very clear, if you *look at the representation of the believer in the word of God.* He is frequently compared to a *traveler;* but no traveler reaches his journey's end merely by starting upon the road. If it should be a journey of seven weeks' length, if he shall sit down after journeying six weeks, he certainly will not reach the goal of his desires. It is necessary, if I would reach a certain city, that I should go every mile of the road; for one mile would not take me there; nor if the city were a 100 miles distant, would 99 miles bring me to its streets. I must journey all the length if I would reach the desired place. Frequently, in the New Testament, the Christian is compared to a *runner*—he runs in a race for a great prize; but it is not by merely starting, it is not by making a great spurt, it is not by distancing your rival for a little time, and then pulling up to take a breath, or sauntering to either side of the road, that you will win the race: we must never stop till we have passed the finish line; there must be no loitering throughout the whole of the Christian career, but onward, like the Roman charioteer, with glowing wheels, we must fly more and more rapidly till we actually obtain the crown. The Christian is sometimes, by the apostle Paul, who somewhat delights to quote from the ancient games, compared to the Grecian *wrestler* or boxer. But it is of little use for the champion to give the foe one blow or one fall—he must continue in the combat until his adversary is beaten. Our spiritual foes will not be vanquished until we enter where the conquerors receive their crowns, and therefore we must continue in a fighting attitude. It is in vain for us to talk of what we have

done or are doing just now, he who continues to the end, the same shall be saved, and none but he.

The believer is also commonly compared to a *warrior:* he is engaged in a great battle, a holy war. Like Joshua, he has to drive out the Canaanites who have chariots of iron, before be can fully take possession of his inheritance; but it is not the winning of one battle that makes a man a conqueror; no, though he should devastate one province of his enemy's territories, yet, if he should be driven out by-and-by, he is beaten in the campaign, and it will yield him but small consolation to win a single battle, or even a dozen battles, if the campaign as a whole should end in his defeat. It is not commencing as though the whole world were to be cleared by one display of fire and sword, but continuing, going from strength to strength, from victory to victory, that makes the man the conqueror of his foe. The Christian is also called a disciple or *scholar*. But who does not know that the boy by going to school for a day or two does not therefore become wise? If the lad should give himself most diligently to his grammar for six months, yet he will never become a linguist unless he shall continue perseveringly in his classic studies. The great mathematicians of our times did not acquire their science in a single year; they pressed forward with aching brow; they burnt the midnight oil and tortured their brains; they were not satisfied to rest, for they could never have become masters of their art if they had lingered on the road. The believer is also called a *builder*, but you know of whom it was said, "This man began to build, but was not able to finish!" The digging out of the foundation is most important, and the building up of stone upon stone is to be carried on with diligence, but though the man should half finish the walls, or even complete them, yet if he does not roof in the structure, he becomes a laughing stock to every passer-by. A good beginning, it is said, is more than half, but a good ending is more than the whole. Better is the end of a thing than the beginning.

In every aspect of the Christian, continuance in faith and well-doing is essential to his safety; without a perpetual perseverance his profession is of no value. We will look at one more illustration, and see this most clearly. Take that simple metaphor of corn: of what value is the corn in the blade or even in the ear? What man can live upon the green blade or the half-formed ear? The joyous shout of the reaper is only evoked by the full corn in the ear; and you, young believer, you, growing Christian, must press forward and ripen into the perfection of your Christian manhood, for it is only then that the shout of "Hallelujah," and "glory to God," shall be fully heard. Take the Christian in any way in which God describes him, and he is one in whose ear is whispered the words, "Forward! Onward!" He is not one who can say, "I have attained." In a certain sense it is true he is saved, but as to his ultimate salvation, his perfection before the throne of God can only be worked in him by the continual, sustained, and abiding work of the Holy Spirit.

2. But the fact that final perseverance is absolutely necessary is also clear, if you for a moment *take into consideration the nature of the case, and suppose that the man did not persevere.* Imagine a man who started

with sincere simple faith in Christ, and with a new heart, and a right spirit; imagine him to have gone back to the world—can you suppose that he will enter heaven? He has deserted good for evil; he has shut his eyes to the light of God, and gone back to the darkness from which he professed to have escaped. He has, not ignorantly, but knowingly and deliberately quenched within his soul the spark of heavenly flame. He knew that the road led to hell, and he turned from it, he knew that the other path led to heaven, and he ran in it; but after a while he tired, he fainted, and he deliberately set his face hell-ward and gave up eternal life, pawning and throwing it away like Esau for a mess of pottage. Do you think it could be said otherwise of him than it was of that selfsame profane Esau, that he found no place for repentance, though he sought, sought it diligently and with tears? For this man, you see, has denied the Lord who bought him. He said he rested on Christ and depended on His precious blood; but he deliberately denies the faith, deliberately returns either to the beggarly elements of his own self-righteousness to rest under the law, or else to plunge again into open sin, and follow the devices of his flesh. What shall be said of this man, but that his last end shall be worse than the first? Enter heaven? How can it be? It is the place of the perfect, and this man, so far from being perfect, does not even press towards it. He has turned aside from perfection, he has given up everything which constituted him a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light; he has, after being illuminated, gone back to darkness; after being quickened, has gone back to the tomb. What remains for him? Take the case into consideration, and you will see at once the impossibility of a non-persevering Christian entering into heaven.

3. Thirdly, I must strengthen that consideration by reminding you that *we have very express declarations in Scripture about professors and about believers too, if such could be, who do not persevere.* Do you not recollect the Savior's words, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"? (Luke 9:62). Do you not remember that terrible sentence about the salt, "Salt is good: but if the salt has lost his savor, with what shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out"? To the same effect is that fearful warning, "Remember Lot's wife!" she came out of the city of destruction, but she looked back, and became a pillar of salt as an everlasting warning to us against so much as the *thought* and look of apostasy. Then comes in that warning, where we are told concerning some, that it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; and that word of Paul, "For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes oft upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God: but that which bears thorns and briars is rejected, and is near unto cursing; whose end is to be burned;" and that of Peter, in his second epistle, and second chapter: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it,

to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (20-22). Supposing a man, then, to have been washed in the blood of Jesus, to be quickened of the Spirit of God—supposing him to have gone back and to have entirely and totally lost all divine grace, he would be the hopeless man, beyond the reach of mercy, damned while yet living, a living hell even in the midst of this world. O beloved, how necessary, then, is it that the Christian should persevere and hold on even to the end!

4. I would have you observe the form of many of the promises, and as we have little time this morning, I ask you to read the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation. There are some very choice promises made to the seven churches, and they are all put in this shape, "To him who *overcomes* will I give," and so on. Not to him who begins the fight; not to him who buckles on his harness; not to him who proclaims war; but "to him who overcomes will I give." The promises are reserved for such, and you know how, contrary to such promises, it is written, "If any man draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him."

Brothers and sisters, before I leave this subject this morning, there is something which I wish to press upon your minds: it is not very pleasant, but it is necessary for us to hear it. Let me remind you of some whom you yourselves have known who did appear to be among the most gracious and excellent of the earth, but are at this moment so far cast off as to have become entirely forgetful, even of the outward forms of religion, and have gone aside, by fearful sins, we fear, into perdition. That, mark you, has happened in some cases after many years of profession: the vessel has been wrecked at the harbor's mouth. The fire of religious excitement burned all day, at least, so they said (we do not search hearts), and it went out at night, just when it was most required, when the chamber, the chill, cold chamber, most needed the genial flame. Doubtless John was right when he said, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." But what a dreadful thing, not to persevere, and yet to have had the name of a Christian! When a man goes up a ladder, if he shall fall at the first step, that is bad; but if he shall fall when he has nearly reached the top, what a falling is there! God save us from it! If ever I prayed in my life, I think I did this morning when we were singing those words, "Let us not fall! Let us not fall!" Oh, to fall backward into perdition is the worst way of falling into hell! Christian, it is not with you that you *may* persevere or not—it is not an optional blessing—you *must* persevere, or else all you have ever known and felt will be good for nothing. You *must* hold on your way if you are ultimately to be saved.

Let me here say, and I leave the point, that I do not assert that a Christian must daily make progress in divine grace; he ought to do so, he should do so; but even if he should not do so, he will not be cast away for that. Neither do I assert that a Christian should always be conscious that he is in the way, for many of the best of God's saints are tormented with

many doubts and fears. Nor do I say that every departure from the way of God is inevitably fatal—far from it, for many have departed for a season, and have been brought back and restored as penitent backsliders. Christian went down By-Path Meadow, and yet returned to the right road: that is a very different case from Demas, who forsook the way to dig in the silver mine, and perished in it. The general current of the soul, however, must be onward: the general current and tendency of the believer must be in the way of truth—both as to his heart and his life; and if it is not so, whatever boasts he may make about his faith, whatever experiences he may think he has had, if he does not hold out to the end, there is no salvation, no heaven, no bliss for him.

II. Secondly, it is possible that I may plunge thoughtful minds into deeper gloom still, while I remind you that while final perseverance is necessary, IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT.

The way itself renders it so. The way to heaven is no smooth-shaven lawn, no well-rolled gravel path; it is a *rough* road, up-hill, down dale, across rivers, and over mountains. He who would get to heaven must have the spirit of Hannibal, who, when he led his troops over the Alps, said, "I will either find a way, or I will make one." You will need all the fortitude that divine grace, itself, can give you in order to reach, along such a road, the city of your desire.

Moreover, the road is *long*. It is a life-long road. To keep near to God by the space of a week is not the easiest thing conceivable. To deny one's passions, to overcome one's evil desires for the space of a month might be difficult, but this is for life*;* we shall not be able to lay down this charge till we lay down our bodies. Here we stand upon our watchtower, not by day alone, though the hot noontide might make us faint, but until the evening star arises, and onward through the dark night till the gleams of morning come; and so day after day, from the first childhood of our spiritual existence until we have matured into a ripe old age, it is watching, watching continually, and laboring and pressing forward. My brothers and sisters, I do not know how it is with some of you, but I feel this and must confess it, that in the early part of our Christian career there is a freshness and a novelty about everything which enables us to travel readily, but after awhile—there is no monotony, it is true, except in ourselves, but it begins to be heavy work to hold on in the ways of the Lord. It ought not to be so, but, alas, it is so! And we have to cry to the strong for strength that we may be renewed, or else the length of the way would wear us out.

Besides that, *the road is so contrary to fallen nature*. It is a way of faith. If it were a way of sight, one might walk in it easily, but it is a way of faith from the beginning to the end—"The just live by faith"—not a way of sensible comforts; not always a way of joyful experiences, but frequently a path of deep tribulation, solemn heart-searching, bitterness, and of gall; a way outside the camp where none can sympathize with you; a way of scourging and of flagellation even from the hand of the great Father Himself, who hides Himself from us for a season. It is a way so contrary to flesh and blood, that he who holds out in it has received

power from on High, and has the Holy Spirit within him. God Himself must dwell in a persevering Christian's heart. The Hebrew word for *hold on,* in the text is very expressive, it signifies to hold with strength, to hold toughly, to hold as with the teeth, resolving never to let go, but ever to go on. Beloved, we must hold on with tooth and nail: if we cannot run, we must walk; if we cannot walk, we must crawl on hands and knees up the hill; and if we cannot even do this, we must stand fast. Any Christians who have had experience of the divine life will say that from the way itself, it is no easy thing to continue in it.

Then, take into consideration, in the next place, as to our difficulties, our *flesh*—that heavy load which we have to take along this weary way. We have constitutional sins, any one of which, if left unwatched for a little season, would cause us to make shipwreck of our faith. Some of us are constitutionally idle; we would scarcely do anything unless the solemn obligation of duty compelled us. Others are constitutionally angry—quick tempered—and for them to become like little children (which they must do if they would be saved) is no easy task. Some, I know, are naturally desponding; their eyes have always a blue tinge, everything looks blue as they look abroad, and it is not so easy for them to trust in the Lord and do good, waiting patiently for the Lord's appearing. These natural infirmities and weaknesses of ours render it hard to drag our flesh along the road to heaven.

Besides this, who does not know that he bears a cage of unclean birds within himself? If my passions were all naturally on God's side, and would, without grace, run towards heaven, then there might be no difficulty in holding on the way; but, alas, the whole of our nature, when let alone, strains and tugs to go back to the land of Egypt! And sometimes it seems as if our baser passions would get the victory and compel us to wear once more the galling yoke, and to fret under the fierce bondage of the Pharaoh of hell. It must not be, it shall not be; but, O God, save me from that evil man, *myself*. "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Paul said so, and we have often had to say it; and, when living nearest to God, we have had to groan most over indwelling sin.

Besides our flesh, however, my brothers and sisters, we are all conscious of other foes in our way to heaven. For instance, there is the *world*. Can you mix with it, and obtain from it any quickening in the *spiritual* life? You are compelled to mix in it; your business calls you; common society demands of you that you should, in some measure mix with the world, for if you are not to speak to sinners, you must go out of the world altogether. But is it not hard work, after a week perhaps of toil with ungodly, blaspheming workmen, to come up to the house of God with the mind quite calm? To be in business with its worries, and its cares, and in the world with its customs, and its maxims, and still to be a child of God, is not easy! Ah, you must be a child of God indeed to remain true in such a world as this. Sometimes the world persecutes the Christian, and it is not always the easiest thing to fight with old Giant Grim, and keep the middle of the way and overcome him. Then there is

that Vanity Fair, and he is a man indeed who can turn a deaf ear to all that crying, "Buy, buy, buy!" Worst of all there is Madam Bubble, with her sweet speech, and her words softer than butter, while inwardly they are drawn swords. You know how Mr. Standfast had to take to his knees before he could get rid of that old witch, when she offered him all sorts of delights, having caught him just in the frame for it, when he said he was as poor as an owlet, and weary and faint, *then* it was she offered him all that is fleshly and pleasant; only tears and prayers got him out of that difficulty. "The righteous shall hold on his way." O God, You have said it, but if You had not said so, we would have declared that in such a world as this it would be impossible for a Christian, through a life of trial, to maintain his integrity.

Then there is *the devil:* we put him last, for he is the most terrible foe. When he stretches his feet across the middle of the way, and swears that he will spill our souls, and we shall go no farther; when he brings the past up and tells us of our unfaithfulness; when he insinuates that there is no hereafter, that there is no heaven, but that our faith is all a foolish invention, and an old wives' fable; and then when he holds out present enjoyment and present gain, and tells us that if we do not get these we shall have nothing, and hisses out the accusation that we are hypocrites, and I know not what—ah, then, unless we carry the true Jerusalem blade of the word of God, and have the grace of God to nerve our arm while we wield that sword of the Spirit, we shall not be "more than conquerors," but die on the road! It is difficult for us to persevere for a while, but it is difficult in the extreme to do so to the end. To get to heaven is no child's work. He who gets there will have to fight for every inch of the road; and when he gets there, oh, how he will clap his hands as he looks back upon the danger; how he will shout with them who triumph when he once finds himself emancipated from 10,000 dangers, and "with God eternally shut in."

III. Thirdly, and, I trust, most comforting to our souls, the PERSEVERANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN IS GUARANTEED.

Would you prefer to hear one or two of the passages of Scripture read which *guarantee* the perseverance of believers? I have little time this morning, but here is one, the 32nd chapter of Jeremiah, 40th verse: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." There is a double blessing—God will not depart from His people—His people shall not depart from Him. Thus doubly are they kept by divine grace. Our Savior's words in the 6th chapter of John, at the 39th and 40th verses, are sweetly to the same import: "This is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." You know that memorable passage a little farther on—the 10th chapter of John, 28th and 29th verses: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck

them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." If more is needed, you might turn to that inexpressibly precious passage in the 8th chapter of Romans, where, towards the close, the apostle, having challenged heaven, and earth, and hell, to condemn the believer, says, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The beloved apostle John, to quote from him once more, has told us in the 19th verse of the second chapter of his first epistle, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But you have unction from the Holy One, and you know all things." These are just a handful of texts, and a mere handful from a vast mass. So clear is the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, that I venture to assert boldly that if the Bible does not teach it, it does not teach anything at all! If that is not a clear doctrine of revelation, then neither is the doctrine of the deity of Christ, nor indeed, any doctrine, and the Bible must be a mere wax nose, to be molded according to our will.

But, beloved, there are these considerations which make the perseverance of the Christian certain to us. *Unless the Christian shall persevere, the eternal purpose of God will be defeated;* for from the beginning God has chosen His people unto holiness, to be set apart for His service, to be purified by His grace that they may be presented at last without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. If believers do not persevere, we have shown that they must perish as other apostates do; therefore, since the purpose of God for the sanctification and safety of His chosen cannot be frustrated, and the design of the Most High stands fast, we believe that the righteous shall hold on his way.

In addition to this, *the work of Jesus Christ would be of no use unless the blood-washed held on their way.* The Lord Jesus has redeemed His people from among men; but if, though they have been redeemed, they should *not persevere* unto the end, they would perish, and then it would follow that Christ shed His blood in vain; bought those whom He will never have; suffered for the sins of men who afterwards have to suffer for their own sins—which always seems to us to be a supposition filled with blasphemous impossibility, that Christ should be a surety for men's sins, and be punished in their place, and yet those men should be punished for the sins which were laid upon their scapegoat. Such must be emphatically the case, brothers and sisters, unless those who are redeemed by blood persevere to the end.

Moreover, through the righteousness of Christ, believers are justified—they are declared to be no longer under the law; but if they do not persevere in holiness, they perish. How can he perish who is justified? How shall he be condemned who is not under the law, and consequently has no law which can condemn him? The thing becomes impossible! We are

involved in a mesh of difficulties, a labyrinth from which we cannot escape, if we suppose it to be possible for a saint to finally fall from grace.

Moreover, all true believers are one with Christ. They are married to Him. Shall Christ lose His spouse? They are members of His body: they are declared to be parts of Himself; and shall Christ be dismembered? Shall He be a dislocated, disjointed, broken-up humanity? No, the church is His fullness—the fullness of Him that fills all in all. If Jesus saves not His church, He is not a perfect Christ—He is a maimed and wounded Savior. My brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus Christ has gone to heaven as our representative—He represents every believer. Does He represent those who shall ultimately be cast into hell? Has He gone to prepare a place for believers? Yes! Then they shall have the place prepared for them, for otherwise the places will be prepared, but the people will not come. Has he not said that He is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him? How then shall it be possible for those who have come to God by Him to perish, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them? Paul uses an overwhelming argument which I cannot this morning open up in full, but it has a triple power about it. "If," he said, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." If when we were enemies, without a thought towards God, He reconciled us, much more will He save us now that we are His children. If we were reconciled, much more shall we be saved, which is by far the least difficult work of the two; and if the death of Christ sufficed to reconcile us, what shall not the *life* of the glorious, immortal Savior do? Surely if the death has done so much, the life shall do yet more, and it shall be true as it is written, "Because I live, you shall live also."

Further, my beloved, as we have spoken of the Father and of the Son, there is *the Holy Spirit's work to be taken into consideration.* He *dwells* in us: shall He be expelled? It is written that we are the temples of the Holy Spirit: shall the temples of the Holy Spirit become like the temples of Jove or of Saturn? Shall they be given up to the moles and the bats, degraded and defiled? God forbid! He who dwells there will drive out the foe and maintain a shrine for Himself in purity. The Holy Spirit has begun to sanctify us: will He begin and not conclude? Shall the Holy Spirit be defeated by the devil and the flesh? Shall the banner of the devil be hung in Satan's hall because he has overcome the elect? Beloved, God gave the victory to Satan for a moment in the Garden of Eden, but with the determination to win it from him; and He has bound captivity captive, and there shall be none of the spoils of the elect left in the hands of the enemy. God shall be conqueror all through the campaign; and at the last the Spirit shall not be defeated in a single heart where He came to dwell. Let us rejoice, then, that when we consider the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it does seem impossible that the righteous should be lost. They must, therefore, hold on their way. Beloved, let us fall back upon this truth of God in our times of worst discouragement; and if any say, "This is not a practical truth, but calculated to lull us into sleep," let us prove, by our activity, that they err, not knowing the truth of God. I can

never conceive that it dispirits the soldier, when he is fighting, to tell him that he will win the victory! This is what Cromwell's ironsides said when they saw the great general riding along the ranks, "'Tis he!" they said, "'tis he!" They felt the victory was sure where Cromwell was, and like thunderbolts they dashed upon their enemies, until as thin clouds before the tempest the enemy flew apace. The certainty of victory gives strength to the arm that wields the sword. To say to the Christian you shall persevere till you get to the journey's end—will that make him sit down on the next mile-stone? No; he will climb the mountain, wiping the sweat from his brow; and as he looks upon the plain, he will descend with surer and more cautious footsteps, because he knows he shall reach the journey's end. God will speed the ship over the waves into the desired haven; will the conviction of that on the part of the captain make him neglect the vessel? Yes, if he is a fool; but if he is a man in his wits, the very certainty that he shall cross the deep will only strengthen him in time of storm to do what he would not have dreamt of doing if he had been afraid the vessel would be cast away. Brothers and sisters, let this doctrine impel us to a holy ardency of watchfulness, and may the Lord bless us and enable us to persevere to the end.

IV. Lastly, PERSEVERANCE IS GUARANTEED, BUT NOT TO EVERYBODY.

There are some here who are not believers in Christ. A text rose up last night out of the Bible and struck me very painfully. I was afraid as I read it that some of you would persevere to the end and would go to hell, for I read these words, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still," and I wondered whether Christ would say that of some of you. I am afraid for you; you have been warned; you have heard the gospel; you have been entreated to wash in the fountain, and you will not come. You have put off many and many a stroke of conscience, and said, "Go your way; when I have a more convenient season I will send for you." Now, mind, mind lest Christ should say, "Let him alone; he is unjust, let him be unjust still; he is prayerless, let him be prayerless still; he never feels the word, let him be unfeeling still; he is a tearless, Christless soul, he shall be so forever." God forbid it! Now, do not any of you who are in that case go home and talk about the comfortable doctrine I have preached; it is nothing to you, you are like the poor shivering outcast in the street who sees Christmas festivities through the window, in which he has no share. Go home, and God break your heart over this; may God cause you to mourn that there is no gracious perseverance for you, because you have no grace to persevere in; and that if you persevere in the road you are now in, it will only be to keep to the road of destruction that will at last end in the dreadful terminus of hell-fire.

There are, on the other hand, some of you who have made a profession of faith; it may be these hands baptized you in the name of the Lord Jesus, in this pool beneath. Ah, well, Christ has not said that you shall *all* persevere. Perhaps you made a profession merely to please parents, or friends, or to do what seemed to be a custom with others; perhaps you never had a deep sense of sin; perhaps you never did rest in Christ: I

pray God that you may not persevere, but may repent and begin anew. Do not say, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. Come as a poor sinner to Christ, and you will never be cast away; but if you merely make a profession of a notional religion that you have in your head, and not in your heart, it will be all ill with you at the last. You will be like the plant which had not much earth; when the sun arose, the root was scorched and the plant withered away. May God give you grace—may you be deeply rooted with divine grace in your heart.

But it is to you who have faith in God—it is to you who this final perseverance is promised, and I ask you to come this morning and take it. "How," you say, "shall I take it?" Why, come to Jesus just as you did when you first came. That is the true final perseverance—to always come to Christ, having nothing in self, but having all in Him. I hope you and I feel, this morning, that the sweet verse of Toplady still fits our case—

"Nothing in my hands I bring—
Simply to Your cross I cling;
Naked, come to You for dress;
Helpless, look to You for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly—
Wash me, Savior, or I die."

Keep to that; never get an inch beyond that. Stand at the foot of the cross and view the sin-atoning blood; rest there living, rest there dying, and then when your spirit mounts to heaven, may your last song be of being washed in Jesus' blood; and in heaven may it be said of you as of your fellow sinners, "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The Lord bless you and keep you, and cause His face to shine upon you, and give you peace. Amen and Amen!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 16:40.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

A TRIUMPHAL ENTRANCE
NO. 750

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 13, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Lift up your heads, O you gates; even lift them up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in."
Psalm 24:9.

ON Monday evening we expounded this Psalm. We then enlarged upon the glorious ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His triumphal entrance within the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem, to which we believe this verse is to be referred. Having on that occasion endeavored to set forth the literal and proper meaning of the words, amplifying them at some length, we trust we may be permitted to use them tonight rather by way of accommodation, while we speak on quite another subject, and give a different turn to the flow of our thoughts. Not that we wish to supersede the natural sense of the prophetic song, although we think that without violence, and even with profit, we may borrow a sentence from it to point out a moral of practical godliness. It is worthy of observation, that the Scotch commentator, Dixon, gives what I am about to suggest to you as *the* true meaning of the text, as also do some one or two other authors, to say nothing of our hymn writers, who claim poetical license for the boldness of their paraphrases. I myself very strongly object to tamper with the literal sense. The allusion of the psalmist, no doubt, is primarily to the ascension of the Ark of the Covenant into Mount Zion, where it was permanently to be lodged; and that historical fact was a type of the ascension of Christ into the Jerusalem which is above, where He sits as the representative of His people. Let *the* meaning be fully understood and admitted, then we shall feel at liberty to use the words we here find for certain practical purposes.

Give ear then, dear friends, to the doctrine which I am anxious to set before you. The Lord Jesus Christ, in order to our salvation, must not only enter into heaven, but He must enter into our hearts. He must not only sprinkle the blood within the veil, but He must sprinkle the blood within our conscience. All that Christ has done *for* us will be of no use unless there shall be a great work done *in* us. It is not only Christ on the cross who is our hope, but "Christ in you," says the apostle, "the hope of glory." At the time of conversion, Jesus Christ enters into the soul, and it is by such a triumphant entrance, when His Word comes into our hearts, that we get the personal knowledge of salvation.

I. First, then, THE GREAT THING TO BE DESIRED BY EACH OF US IS THE ENTRANCE OF THE KING OF GLORY INTO OUR SOULS.

Brothers and sisters, what if I should say that heaven would not be heaven without this? Certainly there would be no happiness here on earth, no heaven below to any one of us unless we had Christ in our hearts. There is nothing but mischief in man's heart when Christ is not there, and another lord usurps dominion over Him. In vain is the gospel preached to any one of the sons of men as long as they, like the strong man armed, keep the gates of the castle of their heart. The eyes of the understanding are blind to the way of peace. Until Christ shall come and take that castle by storm, there is no doing anything for that man; the spirit that works in him is the "spirit that works in the children of disobedience"—he is deceived by Satan, and made a willing slave to that tyrant of evil. What you need, sinner, for your salvation, is that Christ should come unto you; for if He should come unto you, then that dead soul of yours would live. His presence is life. He quickens whom He will. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. When He comes into a soul, spiritual life is there. The sinner wakes up to consciousness and rises from the grave over the mouth of which his reckless indifference, like a great stone, has been rolled, and he cries, "What must I do to be saved?" When Christ comes into the heart, sin is seen to be sinful. In the light of the cross man begins to repent; he sees that his sin has slain the Savior, and he loathes it; he now seeks to be delivered both from its guilt and from its power. The coming of Christ does that. It takes away the guilt of man. Christ in the heart, revealed to the soul, speaks peace to the troubled conscience. We look to Him and are lightened, and our faces are not ashamed. We see the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness in Christ; here we wash and are made clean—as for the reigning power of sin, nothing can ever conquer that but the incoming of Christ. If a man serves an evil master, the only way of getting rid of that hated despot is to bring in the rival sovereign. "No man can serve two masters." The introduction of the King of Glory, Christ Jesus, is the sure way of casting out that old master, Satan, the prince of the power of the air. When the Lord Jesus comes, bringing life, and light, and pardon, He puts down the power of sin, and every blessing comes in His train. Oh, when Christ rides through the streets of our souls, they are strewn with flowers of hope and joy! Then we hang out the streamers of our sacred bliss; we sing of His praise, we are ready to dance before Him for holy mirth; then straightway we love purity and seek for perfection; then we adore the living God whom we had before forgotten, but of whom we can now say, "Our Father who are in heaven." We receive the spirit of adoption to which we had been strangers before.

Then, as soon as Christ has entered our heart, our course is heavenward; our way is towards our Father's face, whereas before, with our backs to the Sun of Righteousness, we wandered into denser gloom, and would have found our way into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. O sinner, if you could but get Christ into your heart, you would say, "I have all things, and abound; I am full,"

but until then you will be naked, and poor, and miserable. Or if you are indeed a living soul you will be uneasy and dissatisfied until Christ has entered into you with all His glorious train, His Spirit and His Word. You will be like a house without a tenant, cold, cheerless, dilapidated, desolate. Your heart will be as a nest without a bird—a poor, sad thing! You will be like a body without the soul that quickens it. But if Jesus comes, He will make a man of you after another sort than that frail image which your father Adam bequeathed you; He will make you new in the image of Him who created you. "Behold, I make all things new," He says. Oh, you cannot tell the influences of His scepter when He sits upon the throne of the heart! You cannot tell what showers of mercy, what streams of benediction, what mountains of joy, and hills of happiness, shall be yours when Jesus comes and reigns in your soul! This, then, is the great business that we ought to see to, that Jesus Christ should come unto us, not merely that we should hear of Him with the ear, or talk of Him with the tongue, but that we should have Him as a priest before the altar, as a King upon the throne of our heart, the chief and highest in the reverence and the affection of our inmost soul.

II. Secondly, THERE ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO CHRIST THUS COMING INTO OUR HEARTS.

The text speaks, you notice, about "doors" and "gates." Surely, if there were doors and gates that needed to be lifted up before Christ could enter into heaven, much more are there doors and gates that must be opened to receive Him into our hearts. Remember that when Jesus Christ went up into heaven, the doors were lifted up, and the gates were opened, and they have never been shut since. There is no passage that says, "Down with your heads, you gates, and be you fast closed, you everlasting doors!" Not a word of that sort! Heaven's gates are open wide! What, then, is shut? Why, the gate of the human soul, the door of the human heart. There are many gates and doors, bars of iron, and bolts of triple steel that stand in the way of Christ. Sometimes it is our *wicked prejudice.* We do not want to know the gospel; we are confirmed in our own self-righteousness, or we hold the traditions of our fathers, who trusted in some outward forms and ceremonies. We do not want to know Christ. Perhaps the very name of the preacher of the gospel is hateful to us, and the name of the place where Christ is lifted up is detestable to us. What a blessing it is to us, when these gates of prejudice are taken away, and the hearing ear is given, and the soul pants to know what this gospel is!

Alas, though it too often happens that when prejudice is removed, there then remains the gate of depravity—*our love of sin* is a strong barrier. We would soon have hailed Christ if it were not that we had harbored an old foe of His. We do not care to give up our former love to lay hold of the true Bridegroom of men's souls. The great difficulty in the way of sinners getting to heaven is that they love sin better than they love their souls. A little drink, a little merriment, a favorite lust, a Sunday holi-

day—any of these trifling joys, these groveling husks that are only fit for swine, will keep souls from Christ, and prevent their laying hold of eternal life. Man loves his own ruin. The cup is so sweet, that though he knows it will poison him, yet he must drink it; and the harlot is so fair, that though he understands that her ways lead down to hell, yet like a bull he follows to the slaughter, till the dart goes through his liver! Man is fascinated and bewitched by sin. He will *not* give up the insidious pleasures which are but for a season, but to gain them he will run the risk of the everlasting ruin of his undying soul. Oh, when God takes away the love of sin, then the gates are lifted up, and the doors are opened! What is there that could prevent our welcoming Christ if we did but hate our sins?

Another great door is *our love of self-righteousness.* Though I have spoken of the love of sin as the strongest door, ought I not to correct myself, and say, that perhaps the love of our own righteousness is a stronger door still? Men may give up their grosser sins while they will hold fast to their fair, but carnal righteousnesses. Yet your own righteousness will as certainly destroy you as your iniquities. If you rest upon what you have done, however good in your own eyes, or however praiseworthy in the esteem of your fellow men that doing may be, you rest on a foundation that will certainly fail you. Your merits or your demerits are alike useless for salvation. God grant that we may no longer boast of ourselves, but put away the Pharisee's pride, and never utter the Pharisee's prayer. The doors must be lifted up.

Then, again, there is that door which I may call the Iron Gate that enters into the city, the innermost door of all, the key of which it is indeed hard to turn—the door of *unbelief*. Oh, that unbelief! It is the ruin of souls; and ah, what trouble, and labor, and anxiety it gives to us who are ministers of the gospel! When talking with anxious enquirers, we are often amazed at the ingenuity with which they resist the entrance of light and truth into their hearts. I do not think I have ever been so much astonished at the invention of locomotive engines, electric telegraphs, or any other feats of human mechanism, as I have been at the marvelous ingenuity of simple people in finding out reasons why they should not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! After we have proved to them to a demonstration that it is both the most reasonable and the fittest thing in the world to trust themselves with Christ, they ask, "Why this?" Or, "Why that?" Or they argue, "But one thing, and but another." We may patiently go through the whole process again, and even when that is done, there comes another, "but." I have hunted these people till they have got to their holes, and I have tried to dig them out, and unearth them, but I find that they can always burrow faster than I can follow them. It is only the grace of God that can deliver us from this ruinous thing, unbelief. You would count it a strange thing, if, when a man condemned to be hanged had a pardon presented to him, he were so ingenious as to find out reasons why he should not escape the gallows; and when these rea-

sons were all refuted, their fallacy exposed, and the good tidings confirmed, he would keep on finding out more reasons why the sentence of execution should be carried into effect! You would say, "Why, foolish man, let these sophistries alone; put your wits to better use; get your liberty first, and then inquire into the manner it was procured afterwards." Men will not take God at His word, and trust Christ at His call; that great doctrine of, "Believe and live," they will reject. Still, still they will object. O that these gates and doors were all removed!

Do not, I beseech you, my dear hearers; do not let me talk about this matter as though I were speaking to people on the moon. It is into your own hearts that admission is sought. And remember that there are doors which keep Christ out. There are gates and doors which some of you willfully close against Him. Though in His place I have stood these many Sundays knocking as best I could at the door—no, not I, but Christ knocking there through me—you have resisted every appeal. You know that His head is wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night, yet you have still kept these doors fastened. They have shaken sometimes a good deal; they have almost seemed to me as if they jarred a bit; I have hastened to see if I could not get my hand in the door, but could not do so. I wish my Master would! How is it that with such a friend outside, standing there in such a lovely attitude, laden with blessings, and ready to enter that He may bless you, how is it that you will still invent further bars, and make fresh locks to keep Him out?

III. Our third point is this—IN ORDER FOR CHRIST TO ENTER WE MUST BE WILLING TO REMOVE THESE BOLTS.

You will notice that the text says, "Lift up *your* heads, O you gates," as if the gates were to lift their own heads. It is addressed to them as though they were to get out of the way. Continually, dear friends, I have to tell you that salvation is by divine grace, emphatically I shall have to impress this upon you presently; yet, at the same time, we never did say, and we hope we never shall say, that we see no necessity to make any appeals to your will. We never said that God would save you against your will. We never thought so. We never believed that a man was plunged into the blood of Jesus Christ if he was unwilling to be washed in it. We never believed that a man had the robe of righteousness put on him by force, he meanwhile resisting with all his might. We never believed that there were pilgrims on the road to heaven who went there driven like convicts in the chain gang, instead of marching willingly and cheerfully towards their desired rest. We never meant to say that you were mere machines whom God had deprived of free agency, or that in order to make you saints, He made you blocks of wood or pieces of marble. No; we have been in the habit of addressing you as reasonable beings, and of talking to you as those who had a will to choose or to refuse. We have tried, with the motives of the gospel, to influence that will. Let us remind you that the gates are bid to lift up their heads; therefore, in God's name, sinner, be willing! Be willing that Christ should enter into your heart; for,

remember, He never enters against our will. He makes us willing in the day of His power; but willing we must be. True, willingness is His gift, but we are made willing; in the case of every soul that comes to Christ there is first given to him the willing mind. "Oh!" says one, "I am willing enough!" Thank God for that, dear hearer, for the most of men will not come unto Him that they may have life. "Oh!" says another, "I am sure my will is good to come to Christ!" I am glad to hear that, for there is a question we have often to ask, "*Will* you be made whole?" But there are some men who do not want to be made whole, and would rather hobble on their crutches, cripples as they are: they would rather indulge their inclination as sinners than be purified and brought into the obedience of faith.

Among those I address tonight, there may be individuals, perhaps, who would not like to have their conscience touched. Here is one man who is making money in a bad trade. "Oh," he says, "I do not want that preacher to make me uneasy!" There is another man here who has been getting so used to his sinful pleasures that it would now be inconvenient for him to give them up. He has even made an appointment that he feels he must keep; and if he were apprehensive that the grace of God might come and overtake him tonight, he feels as if he would rather not. Do not be frightened; it will not occur to you, for the Lord will first give you this premonition of His intending to bless you; He will make you long to be blessed. But before He puts that cup of cooling water to your month, He will make you thirsty; before He enriches you with His treasure, He will make you feel that you are naked, and poor, and miserable. Before Christ goes through the gate, the inhabitants of the city shall be willing to receive Him; no, with outstretched hands they shall look over the battlements and say, "Come in, King of Glory! I long to see You! Come, and welcome! I will throw the gates of my soul wide open to receive You; do but come! I long for You! I watch for Your coming as they who watch for Your appearing; yes, more than they who watch for the morning light."

IV. Fourthly, while you must thus be made willing, IT IS GRACE THAT MUST ENABLE YOU TO BE SO.

Notice *"Be you lift up,* you everlasting doors." "Lift up your heads." "Be you lift up." We speak to a man as a man, and so we must speak to him. Next to this we speak of what God can do, blessed be His name, as a God, when He comes to deal with us, making us willing; and then coming in, with that great arm of His power, entirely to remove those gates which creature strength could not push an inch out of the way. I think I see the inhabitants of that city when the cry is heard, "Lift up your heads, O you gates!" trying to lift them up; trying with all their might; but they cannot do it. The gates are too heavy; the bars seem to be rusted; the bolts are fast in their places. The people cry, "How shall we ever open the gates of this city, and how can we let in the King?"—when an invisible Spirit stands by the side of the wall, amid all the struggles, and as He puts out His power, the gates go up, and the doors fly wide open. This is how it is

with the sinner. God the Holy Spirit comes in and helps our infirmities, and what we could not do because we are weak through the flesh, He helps us to do. The love of sin is given up to begin with, and then the Holy Spirit enables us to give up the sin which we no longer love. Unbelief becomes to us a burden, and we cry, "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief!" and He does help that unbelief, and we do believe; that which we could not do, we do: He who made us willing, makes us able: where the will is present, the power is not withheld. When God has subdued the obstinacy of your heart, He will speedily overcome the infirmity of your hands. If you are thirsty, you shall drink; if you are hungry, you shall eat; if you would have Christ, you shall have Christ, for if you can not open the gates, He can. The difficulty with these gates is that they are everlasting; though I cannot say that the gates which shut Christ out of our hearts are everlasting in one sense, yet they certainly are as old as our own nature, for the old inbred corruption of that always stood out against Christ; and they are such perpetual gates that they never would have been removed if it were not for the grace which came to remove them; and they are everlasting in such a sense that they will be there in time and in eternity. The man who will not have Christ now, will not have Him when he comes to die, and will not have Him in eternity; for even then the gates will still shut out the Savior. The Savior will be forever a stranger and an alien to that man's heart! May God give to you who have been shutting Him out the will to open the door, and then may He come and say, "Be you lift up, you everlasting doors," and may Jesus Christ come in!

V. Not to linger, however, on any one point, let us proceed to notice the willingness of Christ to enter. We have shown you that it should be our great desire that Christ should come in; that there are obstacles; that we must be willing to remove them, and that divine grace will come to our assistance. What next?—JESUS WILL ENTER.

There is no difficulty put here after once the gates are lifted up. There is no suspicion or evidence that He will not enter. It seems to follow as a matter of course. "And the King of Glory shall come in." Oh, yes! When the gates are opened, He *shall* come in! He was willing to come in before. He had sent His servants, and said to them, "Open the gates." He had finished the work which He came to do. He was waiting to be gracious. There was never any unwillingness in Him. The unwillingness was all in us; and as soon as ever that unwillingness is taken away, and the gates are opened, the King of Glory *shall* come in. May the Lord bless me in speaking for a moment to some here who are willing to have the Savior, but who think that He will never come into their hearts. O beloved, do not allow this infernal suggestion to depress your spirits! Are you poor? Believe me, it does not matter what dress you wear, nor in what humble cottage you live, nor how your face may be begrimed with your toil, if you are willing, the King of Glory *shall* come in. He loves to live in those men's hearts whose bodies, like His own, suffer fatigue, and wear the

garments of the workman. Perhaps you say, "But my body has been defiled with sin." But where He comes He cleanses the house by His presence. You never hear it said, "The world is not fit for the sun, because it is so dark; for where the sun comes he makes light," and if after a long winter the world has grown cold and frostbitten, it is not said of the spring, "You must not come, for the world is not fit for you!" No; but the genial influences of spring loosen the rivers, and clothe the earth with green, and bid the bonds of frost be removed; and so spring makes a palace fit for herself, and strews it with flowers from her own hands. My Master will come into your house and live, though you are not worthy that He should come under your roof. He was born in a manger, where the horned oxen fed; He will be born in your heart, where devils once dwelt. My Lord, when He does stoop, may well stoop as low as He can; for it is the greatest wonder that He should stoop at all—not that He stoops in any one particular direction; for, after all, though some of you may have been gross offenders, while others of us, from our youth up, have never uttered an oath, nor entered upon a lustful action, yet there is not so much difference between you and us as that it should seem strange that He should come to you; for if you are black in one sense, we are black in another; and if you have been a drunk, well, I have been an unbeliever; and if you have been a thief, well, I have played false to God; and if there is one sin into which I have not plunged, I have plunged into another. We are very much alike, after all, and it is not so amazing a thing, if we once get our hearts filled with the true wonder that Christ should have saved sinners at all, that He should condescend to display that wonderful grace by saving those who, in the recklessness and daring of their crimes, are ostensibly such great sinners! Jesus Christ *will* come in.

"Well, but suppose He should not?" says one. Ah, never suppose what cannot be! "He who comes unto Me, I will in nowise cast out." Why, the very angels must sometimes be astonished as they say, "Lord, here is such a one coming—shall we shut the gate?" "No," He says, "for I have said that he who comes, I will in nowise cast out." Surely, when the angel of mercy saw Saul of Tarsus coming, he said, "Lord, here is a man who has had his garments splattered with the blood of Stephen; here is that fierce wolf who has whetted his fangs in the blood of many of the saints; here comes this blasphemer, this persecutor—must not he be excluded?" No; the gate stood open, and he found admittance; and as he entered he turned round, and said to the others who were timidly standing outside, "I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe." O soul, if you desire to have Christ, there is no reason why you should not have Him; no, you shall have Him. If you have got so far, by His grace, as to have said, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you everlasting doors," then "the King of Glory *shall* come in," and you shall find a Savior in your heart if you are but willing to receive Him there.

VI. And now, lastly, observe that our text says, "THE KING OF GLORY SHALL COME IN.

This title belongs to the Savior. It proclaims Him in His highest authority. How shall I interpret this to you? The weight, the exceeding eternal weight of glory which belongs to the King of Glory, I cannot explain. O that your thoughts may excel my words! I think I hear a cry, "Behold, your King comes! The King! The King! Stand back, make way. The King comes." There is a moment's bustle, and it is succeeded by a breathless pause. Everyone forgets the business in which he was engaged, and loses the thread of thought in which he was absorbed. All eyes turn, as if by instinct, to look from what direction that cry has broken on their ears: "THE KING OF GLORY!!" A thrill passes through your nerves; a shock goes to your heart, as you listen to the note which tells of His high prerogative. "Who is this King of Glory?" What peerless Prince is this, with a name above every name, and a royalty higher than the kings of the earth? "THE LORD OF HOSTS, HE IS THE KING OF GLORY." And while you look, He is near. You look, you gaze, you behold the pageantry of His high estate; and awe stifles your breath, admiration chains your senses. "Could I have one wish," said that eloquent preacher at the Hague, Mr. James Saurin, "Could I have one wish to answer my proposed end of preaching today with efficacy, it would be to show you God in this assembly." And I say to you, brothers and sisters, could I present at the door of your hearts the King of Glory, and compel you to see Him, you would not hesitate, but open wide the gates to admit Him. Behold the King! Resplendent with all the glory which He had with the Father before the foundation of the world; invested with all the offices of dignity which Jehovah has put upon Him; wearing all the brilliant trophies of His victorious achievements. Hark! Hark! The trumpeters proclaim Him; patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, in loud and swelling notes announce His advent: the acclamations of the redeemed, a vast throng, greet Him. And He rides in triumph straight up to your heart. One glance at Him, sinner, shows you plainly that He challenges your submission by all the grandeur of His title; by all the illustrious insignia of His solemn functions; by all the renown of His mighty acts. As the King of Glory, He must come in—

"But know, nor of the terms complain,
Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign;
To reign, but not with partial sway,
Thoughts must be slain that disobey."

As liege subjects, then, you must yield Him all your homage. Oh, are you willing that the priest should come in? "Yes," you say, "that is what I want; I want Christ to come in with His precious blood, like a priest, and sprinkle me with hyssop, and take away my sins."

He will come as a priest, but not if you refuse him as a king. "Yes," says another, "I am quite willing to receive Christ as a prophet; I want to understand the doctrines; they have puzzled me a great deal, and I want

to understand them." Well, Christ will come as a prophet, but He will not come as a prophet unless you are willing to receive Him also as your King. O sinner, Jesus Christ must have the mastery in your heart, or you shall not have Him at all. Come, now, you have followed your own will; that must be given up. Do you not like that yoke? Do you say, "No, I never did wear one"? You must wear it, or you will be lost. Look at it, now—see how softly it lies! It will never gall your shoulders. "My yoke is easy: My burden is light." Now, you know you have been your own master, and what incessant mutiny there has been in your members. Your own will has been too impotent a ruler to hold the reins of government or maintain peace. You know very well that your own passions have made a great slave of you. Why, the man who gives way to drunkenness—where is there a worse slave in the world than he? Or, take the man who has a passionate temper—why, he does and says a thousand things that he is disgusted with afterwards; but he seems to be driven by his foolishness without the slightest self-control. A worse slavery than that of any galley slave, who was ever chained to the oar, is that slavery of a bad temper. Now, would it not be better to be a servant of Christ than to be the slave of your own hateful lusts, or your own unpredictable whims? I know what you will say—you cannot serve King Jesus, for your companions would laugh at you, and hold you up to ridicule. Oh, what a mean-spirited creature, then, you must be! And so will you let any peering fool be your chieftain, and become the vassal of any man bolder in wickedness than you are? Why, sir, do you call yourself an Englishman? Are you a man at all that you can yield yourself up to be laughed at after this fashion? What? Would you let the gibes or taunts of a workmate restrain you from following what you believe to be good? Why, I am ashamed of you. Putting aside Christianity altogether, I blush for you as a coward. Surely, you might say to them, "What do I care for your laughs, I can always give you as good as you send, only I take care it shall not be in your spirit; I can hold my own, and if you choose to serve the devil, surely it is a free country. I have as much right to serve the King of Glory as you have to serve the prince of darkness. If you choose to go to hell, let me go to heaven; surely, you will not pass a law against that!" There are workmen, I believe, and men of business, and gentlemen, as they are called, of the upper circles who are the most abominable tyrants in their dealings with one another. If you choose to be a Christian, you are sure to get the cold shoulder among the upper classes. No, but the very working men, who prate their democracy, will not let you be a Christian without meeting you at the shop door and saying, "Ah, here is a Presbyterian," or "a Methodist," or something of the sort. What is this but trampling upon liberty of conscience with arrogant tyranny? How can we boast of our love of freedom while such a state of things prevails? Surely, a man has a right to his religion, and you have no right to interfere with him about it.

But now, my dear friend, you are afraid of being laughed at; but let me ask you, which is better, to be a servant of man or a servant of Christ?

Whichever way you may judge, you can never enter heaven's door, to wear Christ's crown unless you are here willing to be Christ's servant, and to bear Christ's cross. "Well, but I do not like this; I do not like that." Refer to the Bible—that is the Master's Book. As it is written there, so let your life and actions be ruled. You remember what the mother of Jesus said to the servants at the wedding in Cana of Galilee? "Whatever He says to you, do it." I do not see how you can serve Christ if there is anything in that Book which you see to be there, and yet willfully neglect. Perhaps there are some of you whom that sentence will hit very hard. I know persons who say they are Baptists in principle, but they have never been baptized! Baptists without any principle at all, I call them—persons who know their Master's will, but who will not obey it; I can make great excuses for brothers and sisters who do not see it; I think they might see it if they liked—but if they do not discern the precept, I can understand their not obeying it; but when people know their Lord's will, and do it not—though I am sure I would not wish to speak hastily on such a matter—I am not certain whether willful disobedience to a known command of Christ may not be a token of their *rejecting Christ altogether!* I would not like to run the risk for myself, at any rate. I would feel it unsafe to say that I believed I was saved, while there was some command of my Lord which I could obey, which I clearly saw to be my duty, and yet to which I solemnly declared I would withhold my obedience. Surely, in such a case, I have not let Christ come into my heart. If you would have Christ, He will be absolute Lord and Master—every humor and stubbornness of yours must be set aside, for where He comes He comes to reign. As He makes His entrance, He comes as the "King of *Glory"*—that is to say, He must be a glorious king, glorious to you—one whom you seek to glorify. You must not receive Him as though He were some paltry potentate who you did not care for, but He must be full of glory to you—the "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"—you must receive Him into your heart; not as men receive a common guest, but as men receive their dearest and most honored friend, one whom they love and reverence with all the powers of their nature. He must be the King of Glory to you; and from now on it must be your desire to glorify Him. This is not a hard thing to ask; for oh, it is the pleasure, it is the foretaste of heaven! It is unspeakable bliss to live to the glory of Christ. Even when one is suffering, suffering is sweet if it brings Him honor! If one is despised for Christ, it is delightful to be reproached if it does but make Him more glorious—

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

Oh, to glorify Christ! I think heaven would lose half its charms for me if I could not glorify Christ there; and the vast howling wilderness were heaven on earth to me if I might but glorify His name here below. To glo-

rify Christ is far more to the Christian's mind than harps of gold, streets of crystal, or gates of pearl. This is the true music of the soul; the true excitement of triumph; the true chorus of eternity—that He always lives; that the crown is on His head; that God also has highly exalted Him. Oh, this is our exultation; this is our joy, our triumph, and our blessedness! If we can but promote His glory, the place where we can best promote it shall be our heaven. The sick bed, the hospital, or the poor house shall be our heaven; if we can there best serve the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the King of Glory.

The year is fast drawing to a close. We call it "the year of grace, 1866." Oh, that it may, indeed, be "the year of grace" to some unconverted persons here! It may be that I am not casting my net tonight where there are many such to be found. Most of you, my hearers, are members of the church of Christ: you are saved, I trust. Still there are sure to be here and there, like weeds growing in a garden of flowers, some who are still strangers to the Lord Jesus Christ. I would to God that the Holy Spirit would move them to say, "Come in, Savior! Let the King of Glory come in!" Oh, let this true saying of the faithful and true witness be your encouragement: "If any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." What a blessed Promise! You breakfasted with the devil, and dined with the world—what a mercy if you should sup with Christ; and what a blessed supper you would have! Why, when you woke tomorrow it would be to breakfast with Christ; it would be to hear Him say, "Come and dine," and then to sup with Him again, and so on until you come to eat bread at the marriage supper of the Lamb. May the Lord bless you; and if He grants me my heart's desire, you will each of you say to your souls, "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 11.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

MORE THAN CONQUERORS
NO. 751

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 19, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."
Romans 8:37.

THE distinguishing mark of a Christian is his confidence in the Christ's love, and the yielding of his affections to Christ in return. First, faith sets her seal upon the man by enabling the soul to say with the apostle, "Christ loved me and gave Himself for me." Then love gives the countersign, and stamps upon the heart gratitude and love to Jesus in return. "We love Him because He first loved us." "God is love," and the children of God are ruled in their inmost powers by love; the love of Christ constrains them. They believe in Jesus' love, and then they reflect it; they rejoice that divine love is set upon them; they feel it shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given to them, and then by force of gratitude they fervently love the Savior with a pure heart.

In those grand old ages, which are the heroic period of the Christian religion, this double mark was very clearly to be seen in all believers in Jesus. They were men who knew the love of Christ, and rested upon it as a man leans upon a staff whose trustiness he has tried. They did not speak of Christ's love as though it were a myth to be respected, a tradition to be reverenced; they viewed it as a blessed reality, and they cast their whole confidence upon it, being persuaded that it would bear them up as upon eagles' wings, and carry them all their days; they were assured that it would be to them a foundation of rock, against which the waves might beat, and the winds blow, but their soul's habitation would stand securely if founded upon it. The love which they felt towards the Lord Jesus was not a quiet emotion which they hid within themselves in the secret chamber of their souls, and which they only spoke of in their private assemblies when they met on the first day of the week, and sung hymns in honor of Christ Jesus the Crucified, but it was a passion with them of such a vehement and all-consuming energy, that it permeated all their lives, became visible in all their actions, spoke in their common talk, and looked out of their eyes, even in their most common glances. Love to Jesus was a flame which fed upon the very marrow of their bones, the core and heart of their being; and, therefore, from its own force burned its way into the outer man and shone there. Zeal for the glory of King Jesus was the seal and mark of all genuine Christians. Be-

cause of their dependence upon Christ's love they *dared* much; and because of their love to Christ they *did* much. Because of their reliance upon the love of Jesus they were not afraid of their enemies; and because of their love to Jesus they scorned to shun the foe even when he appeared in the most dreadful forms. The Christians of the early ages sacrificed themselves continually upon the altar of Christ with joy and willingness. Wherever they were they bore testimony against the evil customs which surrounded them. They counted it foul scorn for a Christian to be as others were; they would not conform themselves to the world; they could not, for they were transformed by the renewing of their minds; their love to Christ compelled them to bear their witness against everything which dishonored Christ by being contrary to truth, and righteousness, and love. They were innovators, reformers, image-breakers, everywhere; they could not be quiet and let others do as they pleased while they followed out their own views, but their protest was continual, incessant, annoying to the foe, but acceptable to God.

In every place the Christian was a speckled bird, because love to Jesus would not allow him to disguise his convictions; he was everywhere a stranger and an alien, because the very language of his everyday life differed from that of his neighbors. Where others blasphemed, he adored; where others used oaths habitually, his "yes" was yes, and his "no," no; where others girt on the sword, he resisted not evil; where others were each man seeking his own and not his brother's welfare, the Christian was known as being one whose treasure was in heaven, and who had set his affections upon things above. This love to Jesus made the Christian a perpetual protestor against evil for the sake of Jesus. It led him yet further—he became a constant witness to the Truth of God which he had found so precious in his own soul. Christians were like Naphtali, of whom it was said: "Naphtali is a hind let loose: he gives goodly words." Tongue-tied Christians, silent witnesses, were scarcely known in apostolic days. The matron talked of Christ to her servants; the child, having learned of Jesus, spoke of Him in the schools; while the Christian workman at the shop testified, and the Christian minister (and these were many in those days, for all men ministered according to their ability) stood in the corners of the streets, or met in their own hired houses with tens or twenties, as the case might be, always declaring the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ, and of His death and resurrection, and of the cleansing power of His blood.

The love of Jesus, I have said at the commencement, was a real passion with those men, and their confidence in Jesus was real and practical; and therefore their testimony for Jesus was bold, clear, and decided. There was a trumpet ring in ancient Christian testimony which startled the old world which was lying in a deep sleep, dreaming filthy dreams; that world loved not to be so awakened, and turning over in its sleep, muttered curses deep and many, and vowed revenge against the disturb-

er who dared break its horrible repose. Meanwhile believers in Jesus, men and women not satisfied with witnessing by their lives and testifying by their tongues in the places where their lot was cast, were continually commissioning fresh bands of missionaries to carry the word into other districts. It was not enough for Paul to preach the gospel at Jerusalem or Damascus, he must journey into Pisidia and Pamphylia, he must journey to the utmost verge of Asia Minor, and then, so full of Christ is he, that he dreams of eternal life, and when he falls asleep, he sees in a vision a man of Macedonia across the blue Aegean, entreating him, "Come over and help us." And with the morning light Paul rises, fully resolved to take ship and preach the gospel among the Gentiles! Having preached Christ throughout all Greece, he passed over to Italy, and though chained, he entered as God's ambassador within the walls of the imperial city of Rome; and it is believed that after that, his sacredly restless spirit was not satisfied with preaching throughout Italy, but he must cross into Spain, and it is said even into Britain itself. The ambition of the Christian for Christ was boundless; beyond the pillars of Hercules, to the utmost islands of the sea, believers in Jesus carried the news of a Savior born for the sons of men. Those were days of ardor. I fear these are days of lukewarmness. Those were times when the flame was like coals of juniper, which have a most vehement heat, and neither shipwreck, nor peril by robbers, nor peril by rivers, nor peril by false brethren, nor the sword itself, could stay the enthusiasm of the saints, for they believed, and therefore spoke; they loved, and therefore served, even to the death.

Thus I introduce to you our text. Behold the men and their conflict for Christ! It was natural; it was inevitable that they should provoke enmity. You and I do not love Christ much, nor believe much in His love—I mean the most of us. We are a sickly, unworthy, degenerate generation. We leave the world alone, the world leaves us alone. We conform a great deal to worldly customs, and the world is not annoyed by us. We do not dog the world's heels, perpetually declaring the Truth of God as we ought to do, and therefore the world is not impatient with us—it thinks us a very good sort of people, a little whimsy, crazed about the head perhaps, but still very bearable and well-behaved—and so we do not meet with half the enemies which they did of old, because we are not half such true Christians, no, not one-tenth such saints as they. But if we were more holy, in proportion as we were so, we should meet with the same battle, though it may be in another shape. Though I spoke thus censoriously of all, there are some few here, I trust, who have been enabled by divine grace to know the power of the love of Jesus, and who are living under its influences, and contending for the sovereignty of the thorn-crowned King—these are they who will endure the same fight in other forms as the conflict of apostolic days, and these are they who may use without falsehood the language of my text: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

I will ask you, this morning, as we are assisted by the Holy Spirit, first, to consider *the victories already won;* secondly, *the laurels of the fight;* thirdly, *the men who won them;* and fourthly, *the power by which the conquest was achieved.*

I. First, this morning, we shall view THE VICTORIES ALREADY WON by those who have been possessed by the love of Jesus.

Look attentively at the champion. It needs no stretch of the imagination to conceive this place to be a Roman amphitheatre. There in the midst of the arena stands the hero. The great doors of the lion's dens are lifted up by machinery, and as soon as the lairs are open, rushing forth with fury come bears and lions, and wild beasts of all kinds, that have been starved into ferocity, with which the champion is to contend. Such was the Christian in Paul's day, such is he now. The world is the theater of conflict—angels and devils look on; a great cloud of witnesses view the fight—and monsters are let loose against him, with whom he must contend triumphantly.

The apostle gives us a little summary of the evils with which we must fight, and he places first, *"tribulation."* The word "tribulation," in the Latin, signifies threshing, and God's people are often cast upon the threshing floor to be beaten with the heavy flail of trouble; but they are more than conquerors, since they lose nothing but their straw and chaff, and the pure wheat is thus separated from that which was of no benefit to it. The original Greek word, however, suggests pressure from without. It is used in the case of persons who are bearing heavy burdens, and are heavily pressed upon. Now, believers have had to contend with outward circumstances more or less in all ages. At the present day, there are very few who do not at some time or other in their lives meet with outward pressure, either from sickness or from loss of goods, or from bereavements, or from some other of the thousand and one causes from which affliction springs. The Christian has not a smooth pathway. "In the world, *you shall have* tribulation," is a sure promise, which never fails of fulfillment. But under all burdens, true believers have been sustained, no afflictions have ever been able to destroy their confidence in God. It is said of the palm tree, that the more weights they hang upon it the more straight and the more lofty does it tower towards heaven; and it is so with the Christian. Like Job, he is never as glorious as when he has passed through the loss of all things, and at last rises from his dunghill mightier than a king. Brothers and sisters, you must expect to meet with this adversary as long as you are here; and if you now suffer the pressure of affliction, remember you must overcome it, and not yield to it. Cry unto the strong for strength, that your tribulation may work out for you patience, and patience experience, and experience hope that makes not ashamed. The next in the list is *"distress."* I find that the Greek word rather refers to mental grief than to anything external. The Christian suffers from external circumstances; but this is probably a less affliction

than internal woe. "Straitness of place" is something like the Greek word. We sometimes get into a position in which we feel as if we could not move, and are not able to turn to the right hand or to the left: the way is shut up; we see no deliverance, and our own consciousness of feebleness and perplexity is unbearably terrible. Do you ever get into this state in which your mind is distracted, you know not what to do; you cannot calm and steady yourself; you would if you could calmly consider the conflict, and then enter into it like a man with all his wits about him; but the devil and the world, outward trial and inward despondency combined, toss you to and fro like the waves of the sea, till you are, to use John Bunyan's Saxon expression, "much tumbled up and down in your mind." Well, now, if you are a genuine Christian, you will come out of this all right enough. You will be more than a conqueror over mental distress. You will take this burden, as well as every other to your Lord, and cast it upon Him; and the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to be the Comforter, will say to the troubled waves of your heart, "Be still." Jesus shall say, as He walks the tempest of your soul, "It is I, be not afraid;" and though the outward tribulation and the inward distress meet together like two contending seas, they shall both be calmed by the power of the Lord Jesus.

The third evil the apostle mentions is *"persecution,"* which has always fallen upon the genuine lovers of Christ; their good name has been slandered. I should blush to repeat the villainies which have been uttered against the saints of the olden times. Suffice it to say, there is no crime in the category of vice which has not been falsely laid to the door of the followers of the pure and holy Jesus. Yet slander did not crush the church; the fair name of Christianity outlived the reputation of the men who had the effrontery to accuse her. Imprisonment followed slander, but in prisons God's saints have sung like birds in cages, better than when they were in the fields of open liberty. Prisons have glowed into palaces, and been sanctified into the dwelling places of God Himself, far more sacred than all the consecrated domes of gorgeous architecture. Persecution has sometimes taken to banishing the saints, but in their banishment they have been at home, and when scattered far and wide, they have gone everywhere preaching the Word, and their scattering has been the gathering together of others of the elect. When persecution has even resorted to the cruelest torments, God has had many a sweet song from the rack. The joyful notes of holy Lawrence, broiling upon the gridiron, must have been more sweet to God than the songs of cherubim and seraphim, for he loved God more than the brightest of them, and he proved it in his bitterest anguish; and holy Mr. Hawkes, when his lower extremities were burnt, and they expected to see him fall over the chain into the fire, lifted his flaming hands, each finger spurting fire, and clapped them three times, with the shout of, "None but Christ, none but Christ!" God was honored more by that burning man than even by the

ten thousand times ten thousand who ceaselessly hymn His praises in glory. Persecution, in all its forms, has fallen upon the Christian church, and up to this moment it has never achieved a triumph, but rather it has been an essential benefit to the church, for it cleared her of hypocrisy; when cast into the fire the pure gold lost nothing but its dross and tin, which it might well be glad to lose.

Then the apostle adds *"famine."* We are not exposed to this evil so much nowadays, but in Paul's time those who were banished were frequently carried to places where they could not exercise their handicraft to earn their bread. They were taken away from their vocations, from their friends, from their acquaintances; they suffered the loss of all their goods, and consequently they did not know where to find even the necessary sustenance for their bodies; and no doubt there are some now who are great losers by their conscientious convictions—who are called to suffer, in a measure, even famine itself. Then, the devil whispers, "You ought to look after your house and children; you must not follow your religion so as to lose your bread." Ah, my friend, we shall then see whether you have the faith that can conquer famine; that can look gaunt hunger in the face; look through the ribs of the skeleton, and yet say, "Ah, famine itself I will bear sooner than sell my conscience, and stain my love to Christ."

Then comes *nakedness;* another terrible form of poverty. The Christian banished from house to house, and prevented from working at his trade, was not able to procure necessary funds and therefore his garments gradually fell to rags, and the rags, one by one, disappeared. At other times the persecutors stripped men and women naked to make them yield to shame; but nakedness, even in the case of the most tender and sensitive spirits, though such were exposed to this evil in the olden days, was unable to daunt the unconquerable spirit of the saints. There are stories in the old martyrologies of men and women who have had to suffer this indignity, and it is reported by those who looked on that they never seemed to be so gloriously arrayed; for when they were stood naked before the whole bestial throng, that they might gaze upon them with their cruel eyes, their very bodies seemed to glow with the glory of heaven, as with calm countenance they surveyed their enemies, and gave themselves up to die.

The apostle mentions next to nakedness, *peril*—that is, constant exposure to sudden death. This was the life of the early Christian. "We die daily," said the apostle. They were never sure of a moment's mercy, for a new edict might come forth from the Roman emperor to sweep the Christians away. They went literally with their lives in their hands wherever they went. Some of their perils were voluntarily encountered for the spread of the gospel; perils by rivers and by robbers were the lot of the Christian missionary going through inhospitable climes to declare the gospel. Other perils were the result of persecution; but we are told here

that believers in Jesus so steadily reposed upon Christ's love, that they did not feel peril to be peril; and the love of Christ so lifted them up above the ordinary thoughts of flesh and blood, that even when perils became perils indeed, they entered upon them with joy, out of love to their Lord and Master.

And to close the list, as if there were a sort of perfection in these evils, the seventh thing is *the sword,* that is to say, the apostle Paul singles out one cruel form of death as a picture of the whole. You know, and I need not tell you, how the noble armies of my Master's martyrs have given their necks to the sword, as cheerfully as the bride upon the marriage day gives her hand to the bridegroom. You know how they have gone to the stake and kissed the firewood; how they have sung on the way to death, though death was attended with the cruelest torments; and you know how they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy, even to leaping and dancing at the thought of being counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. The apostle tells us that the saints have suffered all these things put together. He does not say in *some* of these things we are conquerors, but in *all!* Many believers literally passed through outward need, inward trial, persecution, need of bread, lack of raiment, the constant hazard of life, and at last laid down life itself; and yet in every case through the whole list of these gloomy fights, believers were more than conquerors. beloved, this day you are not, the most of you, called to peril, or nakedness, or sword; if you were, my Lord would give you grace to bear the test; but I think the troubles of a Christian at the present moment, though not outwardly so terrible, are yet more hard to bear than even those of the fiery age. We have to bear the sneer of the world—that is little; its blandishments, its soft words, its oily speeches, its fawning, its hypocrisy, are far worse. O beloved, your danger is lest you grow rich and become proud, lest you give yourselves up to the fashions of this present evil world, and lose your faith. If you cannot be torn in pieces by the roaring lion, you may be hugged to death by the bear, and the devil cares little which it is so long as he gets your love to Christ out of you, and destroys your confidence in Him. I fear that the Christian church is far more likely to lose her integrity in these soft and silken days than she was in those rough times. Are there not many professing Christians whose methods of trade are just as vicious as the methods of trade of the most shifty and tricky of the unconverted? Have we not some professed Christians who are altogether worldly? Whose non-attendance at our meetings for prayer, whose lack of generosity to Christ's cause, whose entire conduct indeed proves that if there is any grace in them at all, it is not the grace which conquers the world, but the pretended grace which lets the world put its foot upon its neck? We must be awake now; for we traverse the enchanted ground, and are more likely to be ruined than ever, unless our faith in Jesus is a reality, and our love to Jesus a vehement flame. We are likely to become bastards and not sons, tares and

not wheat, hypocrites with fair vineyards, but not the true living children of the living God. Christians, do not think that these are times in which you can dispense with watchfulness or with holy ardor; you need these things more now than ever, and may God the eternal Spirit display His omnipotence in you, that you may be able to say, in all these softer things as well as in the rougher, "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

II. I shall with great brevity turn to the second head of the discourse. Let us inspect THE LAURELS OF THE FIGHT.

Up to now believers have been conquerors, but the text says they have been *"more than conquerors."* How is that? The word in the original is one of the apostle Paul's strong expressions; it might be rendered, "more exceedingly conquerors." The Vulgate, I think, has a word in it which means, "over over-comers," over and above conquering. For a Christian to be a conqueror is a great thing—how can he be more than a conqueror? I think in many respects, first, a Christian is better than some conquerors because *the power by which he overcomes is far nobler.* Here is a champion just come from the Greek games; he has well-near killed his adversary in a severe boxing match, and he comes in to receive the crown. Step up to him, look at that arm, and observe the muscles and sinews. Why, the man's muscles are like steel, and you say to him, "I do not wonder that you beat and bruised your foe; if I had set up a machine made of steel that worked by a little watery vapor, it could have done the same, though nothing but mere matter would have been at work. You are a stronger man and more vigorous in constitution than your foe—that is clear; but where is the particular glory about that? One machine is stronger than another. No doubt, credit is to be given to you for your endurance, after a sort; but you are just one big brute beating another big brute. Dogs, and bulls, and gamecocks, and all kinds of animals would have endured as much, and perhaps more." Now, see the Christian champion coming from the fight, having won the victory! Look at him! He has overcome human wisdom; but when I look at him, I perceive no learning or cunning: he is a simple, unlettered person who knows that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; yet he has won the victory over profound philosophers—then he is more than a conqueror. He has been tempted and tried in all sorts of ways, and he was not at all a crafty person; he was very weak, yet somehow he has conquered. Now this is being more than a conqueror, when weakness overcomes strength, when brute force is baffled by gentleness and love. This is victory indeed, when the little things overcome the great things; when the base things of this world overthrow the mighty, and the things that are not bring to nothing the things that are. Yet this is just the triumph of divine grace. The Christian is, viewed according to the eye of sense, weak as water; yet faith knows him to be irresistible. According to the eye of sense, he is a thing to be trampled upon, for he will not resist; and yet, in the sight of

God, he becomes in this very way, by his gentleness and patience, more than a conqueror.

The Christian is more than a conqueror, again, because the conqueror fights for victory—*fights with some selfish motive.* Even if the motive is patriotism, although from another point of view, patriotism is one of the highest of worldly virtues, yet it is only a magnificent selfishness by which one contends for one's own country instead of being subject to the far more generous cosmopolitan thought of caring for all men. But the Christian fights neither for any set of men nor for himself—in contending for the truth of God he contends for all men, but especially for God; and in suffering for the right he suffers with no prospect of earthly gain. He becomes more than a conqueror both by the strength with which he fights and the motives by which he is sustained, which are better than the motives and the strength which sustain other conquerors.

He is more than a conqueror, because *he loses nothing even by the fight itself.* When a battle is won, at any rate the winning side loses something. In most wars the gain seldom makes any recompense for the effusion of blood; but the Christian's faith, when tried, grows stronger; his patience, when tempted, becomes more patient. His graces are like the fabled Anteus, who, when thrown to the ground, sprang up stronger than before, by touching his mother earth; for the Christian, by touching his God and falling down in helplessness into the arms of the Most High, grows stronger by all that he is made to suffer. He is more than a conqueror, because he loses nothing even by the fight and gains wondrously by the victory.

He is more than a conqueror over persecution, because *most conquerors have to struggle and agonize to win the conquest.* But, my brothers and sisters, many Christians, yes, and all Christians, when their faith in Christ is strong and their love to Christ is fervent, have found it even easy to overcome suffering for the Lord. Look at Blandina, enveloped in a net, tossed upon the horns of bulls, and then made to sit in a red hot iron chair to die, and yet unconquered to the end. What did the tormentors say to the emperor—"Oh, Emperor," said the tormentors, "we are ashamed, for these Christians mock us while they suffer your cruelties." Indeed, the tormentors often seemed to be themselves tormented; they were worried to think they could not conquer timid women and children. They devoured their own hearts with rage; like the viper which gnaws at the file, they broke their teeth against the iron strength of Christian faith; they could not endure it because these people suffered without repining, endured without retracting, and glorified Christ in the fires without complaining. I love to think of Christ's army of martyrs, yes, and of all His church, marching over the battlefield, singing as they fight, never ceasing the song, never allowing a note to fall, and at the same time advancing from victory to victory; chanting the sacred hallelujah while they tramp over their foes. I saw one day upon the lake of Orta, in northern Italy, on

some holy-day of the church of Rome, a number of boats coming from all quarters of the lake towards the church upon the central islet of the lake, and it was singularly beautiful to hear the splash of the oars and the sound of song as the boats came up in long processions, with all the villagers in them, bearing their banners to the appointed place of meeting. As the oars splashed they kept time to the rowers, and the rowers never missed a stroke because they sang, neither was the song marred because of the splash of the oars, but on they came, singing and rowing—and so has it been with the church of God. That oar of obedience, and that other oar of suffering—the church has learned to ply both of these, and to sing as she rows: "Thanks be unto God, who always makes us to triumph in every place!" Though we are made to suffer, and are made to fight, yet we are more than conquerors, because we are conquerors even while fighting; we sing even in the heat of the battle, waving high the banner, and dividing the spoil even in the center of the fray. When the fight is hottest we are then the most happy; and when the strife is most stern, then most blessed; and when the battle grows most arduous, then, "calm amid the bewildering cry, confident of victory." Thus the saints have been in those respects more than conquerors.

More than conquerors I hope this day, because *they have conquered their enemies* by doing them good, converting their persecutors by their patience. To use the old Protestant slogan, the church has been the anvil, and the world has been the hammer; and though the anvil has done nothing but bear the stroke, she has broken all the hammers as she will do to the world's end. All true believers who really trust in Jesus' love, and are really fired with it, will be far more glorious than the Roman conqueror when he drove his milk-white steeds through the imperial city's streets; then the young men and maidens, matrons and old men gathered to the windows and chimney tops, and scattered flowers upon the conquering legions as they came along; but what is this compared with the triumph which is going on even now as the great host of God's elect come streaming through the streets of the New Jerusalem? What flowers are they which angels strew in the path of the blessed? What songs are those which rise from yonder halls of Zion, jubilant with song as the saints pass along to their everlasting habitations?

III. The time has almost failed me, and therefore, in the third place, but two or three words. Who are THE PERSONS WHO HAVE CONQUERED?

Attentively regard these few words which I utter. The men who conquered in the fight up till now have been known only by this—the two things I mentioned at the first—men who *believed* in Christ's love to them, and who were possessed with love to Christ; for there has been no other distinction than this. They have been rich—Caesar's household yielded martyrs. They have been poor—the inscriptions on the tombs of the catacombs are few of them spelt correctly; they must have been very

poor and illiterate persons who constituted the majority of the first Christian churches, yet all classes have conquered. At the stake bishops have burned and princes have died, but more numerous, still have been the weavers and the tailors, and the seamstresses. The poorest of the poor have been as brave as the wealthy; the learned have died gloriously, but the unlearned have almost stolen the palm. Little children have suffered for Christ; their little souls, washed in the blood of Jesus, have also been encrimsoned with their own; meanwhile, the aged have not been behind. It must have been a sad but glorious sight to see old Latimer, when past seventy, taking off all his garments but his shirt, and then standing up and saying, as he turned round to Mr. Ridley, "Courage, brother; we shall this day light such a candle in England as, by the grace of God, shall never be put out." Oh, if you wish to serve my Master, old men, you have not passed the prime of your days for that; young men, if you would be heroes, now is the opportunity! You who are poor, you may glow with as great a glory as the rich, and you who have substance may count it your joy if you are called in the high places of the field to do battle for your Lord! There is room for all who love the Lord in this fight, and there are crowns for each! O that God would only give us the spirit and the strength to enlist in His army, and to fight till we win the crown! I leave that point, beloved friends, hoping that you will enlarge upon it in your thoughts.

IV. And now to close. The apostle distinctly tells us, THE POWER, MYSTERIOUS AND IRRESISTIBLE, WHICH SUSTAINED THESE MORE THAN CONQUERORS, was, *"Through Him who loved us."*

They conquered through Christ's being their captain. Much depends upon the leader. Christ showed them how to conquer by personally enduring suffering and conquering as their example. They triumphed through Christ as their teacher, for His doctrines strengthened their minds, made them strong, made them angelic, made them divine—for He made them partakers of the divine nature. But, above all, they conquered because Christ was actually with them! His body was in heaven, for He has risen, but His Spirit was with them. We learn from all the history of the saints, that Christ has a way of infusing supernatural strength into the weakest of the weak. The Holy Spirit, when He comes into contact with our poor, wavering, feeble spirits, girds us up to something which is absolutely impossible to man alone. You look at man as he is, and what can he do? Brothers and sisters, he can do nothing! "Without Me, you can do nothing." But look at man with God in him, and I will reverse the question—What can he *not* do? I do not see a man burning in yonder fires, I see Christ suffering in that man. I do not see a martyr in prison so much as the divine power laughing at the thought of imprisonment and scorning iron bands. I do not so much see a simpleminded virgin, uneducated, contending with sophists and cavilers, as I see the Spirit of the living God speaking through her simple tongue, teaching her in the same

hour what she shall speak, and proving the truth of God that the foolishness of God is greater than the wisdom of man, and the feebleness of God is stronger than the power of man.

Oh, it is glorious to think that God should thus take the meanest, poorest, most feeble things, and should put Himself into them, and then say, "Come on, all you who are wise and great, and I will baffle you through those who are foolish and feeble! Now, come, you devils of hell; come, you men of earth who breathe out threats, and foam with cruelty; come all of you, and this poor defenseless one shall laugh you all to scorn, and triumph even to the last!" It is the power of Christ. And did you notice the name by which the apostle called our Lord in the text? It is so significant that I think it is the key to the text, "Through Him who loved us." Yes, His love yielded them victory. They knew He loved them, had loved them, and always would love them. They knew that if they suffered for His sake, it was His love which let them suffer for their ultimate gain, and for His permanent honor. They felt that He loved them; they could not doubt it, they never mistrusted that fact, and this it was that made them so strong. O beloved, are you weak today? Go to Him who loved you. Does your love grow cold today? Do not go to Moses to get it improved; do not search your own heart with a view of finding anything good there, but go at once to Him who loved you. Think, this morning, of our Lord's leaving heaven, and of His incarnation upon earth. Think especially of the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, the wounds of Calvary, the dying thirst, the, "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?" Think of all that. Get Christ's love to you burnt into your inmost consciousness; and in the strength of this, fear no difficulties, dread no tribulations, but march to your life-battle as the heroes of old went to theirs, and you shall return with your crowns of victory as they returned with theirs, and you shall find that verse which we just now sang to be most divinely true—

"And they who, with their Leader, have conquered in the fight,
Forever and forever, are clad in robes of white."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— ROMANS 8:28-39; HEBREWS 11:32-40.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY
NO. 752

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 26, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Your eyes shall see the king in His beauty:
they shall behold the land that is very far off."
Isaiah 33:17.

WHEN the Assyrians had invaded Judea with an immense army, and were about to attack Jerusalem, Rabshakeh was sent with a railing message to the king and his people. When Hezekiah heard of the blasphemies of the proud Assyrian, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord, and sent the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, to consult with Isaiah the prophet. The people of Jerusalem, therefore, had seen their king in most mournful array, wearing the garments of sorrow, and the clothes of mourning; they were, however, cheered by the promise that there would be so complete a defeat of Sennacherib that the king should again adorn himself with the robes of state, and appear with a smiling countenance in all the beauty of joy. Moreover, through the invasion of Sennacherib, the people had not been able to travel; they had been cooped up within the walls of Jerusalem like prisoners. No journeys had been made, either in the direction of Dan or Beersheba, even the nearest villages could not be reached; but the promise is given that so completely should the country be rid of the enemy, that wayfarers should be able to see the whole of their territory, even that part of the land which was very far off; it would be safe for them to make long voyages; they would no longer be afraid of the oppressor, but should find the highways, which once lay waste, to be again open and safe for traffic.

In these days of gospel truth, dear friends, we see in this text a meaning far surpassing that which gladdened the citizens of Zion. We have a nobler King than Hezekiah; He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. We have seen our well-beloved Monarch, in the days of His flesh, humiliated and sorely vexed; for He was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He whose brightness is as the morning, wore the sackcloth of sorrow as His daily dress; shame was His mantle, and reproach was His vesture. None was more afflicted and sorrowful than He. Yet now, inasmuch as He has triumphed over all the powers of darkness upon the bloody tree, our faith beholds our King in His beauty, returning with dyed garments from Edom, robed in the splendor of victory. No longer does He wear the purple robe of mockery; but He is clothed

with a garment down to the feet, and gird with a golden belt. We also, His joyful subjects who were once shut up and could not come forth, are now possessed of boundless gospel liberty. Now that we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, we freely possess to its utmost bounds the covenant blessings which He has given to us; and we rejoice that if the land of happiness should sometimes seem very far off, it is nevertheless our own, and we shall stand in our lot in the end of the days. The Savior highly exalted, and ourselves at a happy liberty—these are two rich themes for thought; may God the Holy Spirit grant that we may find wines on the lees well refined stored in the text.

I. Proceeding, without further preface, to the text itself, we remark that WE HAIL THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS OUR KING.

We—I must not speak for you all—I wish I could; but there are some here, at any rate, who have bowed the knee to that great Son of David, who is the Son of God; who delight to feel that Jesus is their heart's Lord, the unrivalled Master of their affections. I speak of such—we hail Immanuel as King. *His right* to royalty lies first in *His exalted nature as the Son of God.* Who should be king but Jehovah? And, inasmuch as Jesus Christ is very God of very God, let Him reign, let His Kingdom come, let Him in all things have the pre-eminence. Bow down, you creatures of His hand, and do Him homage, for the Lord is King forever and ever. Hallelujah! Let His opposers tremble at the unchangeable decree, for the Son of God must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet; for it is not to be endured that God should not be King in His own world; neither will it forever be allowed that God in the earth which He has fashioned, should be forgotten or blasphemed. He who is God over all, blessed forever, shall yet be worshipped by every knee, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. Jesus has a right to reign because *He is the Creator.* "Without Him was not anything made that was made." Shall not the potter exercise lordship over His own clay? If the Son of God has made and formed us, shall He not command us? Who are the potsherds that shall set themselves in array against Him? Surely He shall break them as with a rod of iron, and dash them into shivers! Besides this, the Lord Jesus is *the preserver of all men;* for by Him all things consist. It is by virtue of His intercession that the barren trees are not cut down; by the force of His tender love sinners are spared upon the earth. Should He not reign? If the breath of our nostrils is in His keeping, and we are ourselves the sheep of His pasture, should we not cheerfully yield to His generous rule? Besides this, and over and above the natural rights of Christ to reign, He governs by virtue of His headship of *the mediatorial kingdom.* He is not merely King because He is God, but He is King in His complex nature as God and man. Here He has the rights of *divine delegation,* for God has made Him King. Some of the worst of tyrants have delighted to call themselves kings by divine right; emperors by the will of God; monarchs by the grace of God, and the like. It may be so; I doubt not many of

earth's tyrants require much grace, lest their crimes should bring them to speedy ruin; and doubtless it is sometimes the will of God to inflict great scourges upon guilty nations; but, my brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is no despotic claimant of divine right, but He is really and truly the Lord's Anointed! "It has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." God has given to Him all power and all authority. As the Son of man, He is now head over all things to His church, and He reigns over heaven, and earth, and hell, with the keys of life and death at His side. "The government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." We recognize Him as King by divine right. We see in Him most clearly that true deity which "does hedge a king," and we meekly bow before Him whom God has "appointed to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins."

Certain princes have delighted to call themselves kings by *the popular will,* and certainly our Lord Jesus Christ is such in His church. If it could be put to the vote whether He should be King in the church, every believing heart would crown Him! O that we could crown Him more gloriously than we do! We should count no expense to be wasted that could glorify Christ. Suffering would be pleasure, and loss would be gain, if thereby we could surround His brow with brighter crowns, and make Him more glorious in the eyes of men and angels. Yes, He shall reign. Long live the King. All hail to You, King Jesus! Go forth, you virgin souls who love your Lord, bow at His feet, strew His way with lilies of your love, and the roses of your gratitude; "Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all."

Moreover, our Lord Jesus is King in Zion by right of conquest. He has taken and carried by storm the hearts of His people, and has slain their enemies who held them in cruel bondage. In the Red Sea of His own blood, our Redeemer has drowned the Pharaoh of our sins; shall He not be King in Jeshurun? He has delivered us from the iron yoke and heavy curse of the law; shall not the Liberator be crowned? We are His portion, whom He has taken out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow, who shall snatch His conquest from His hand? All the rights of conquest support the throne of the Lord's Anointed, for God has declared that He will give Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong: we are that spoil; we are trophies of His victory, the treasure for which He laid down His life, that He might redeem us unto Himself. We, therefore, who have believed in Him, accept Him to be King, and do not for a moment question His right. We see Him to be established upon the throne of His Father, and rejoice that though the people rage, and the kings of the earth take counsel together, yet has the Lord set His King upon His holy hill of Zion, and said: "You are My Son, this day have I begotten You." All hail, Jesus, King of our souls!

Now, my brothers and sisters, in this great kingdom of our Lord Jesus, *it behooves us, since we thus verbally acknowledge Him to be King, to distinctly understand what this involves.* We look upon the Lord Jesus as being to us *the fountain of all spiritual legislation.* He is a King in His own right—no limited monarch—but an autocrat in the midst of His church, and in the church all laws proceed from Christ and Christ only. As for us, His people, we reject with scorn and disdain all the spiritual legislation of kings and parliaments, of bishops and councils. We are loyal subjects of political rulers in political things, and none honor the king more than we do. In whatever state the Christian is cast, he counts it to be his Christian duty to submit himself to the powers that be; but, within the church of God, we know no royal sway of Caesar; we have another King, one Jesus: let Caesar mind his own, and never venture to touch the crown-right of Jesus. Away with that base thinking which has laid the church of God at the foot of kings and princes, so that they, indeed, can put their feet upon the neck of the free bride of our Lord Jesus Christ! We deny that either king or parliament can legislate for Christ's church; for Thomas Cranmer's church they may if they please, but for Christ's church, never! In the midst of those churches which are true to Christ's authority, the Bible is the only statute book, and the living Jesus the only lawgiver. As Christ alone is the fountain of all spiritual legislation, so He alone *gives authority* to that legislation. If we are commanded to baptize, we baptize not because we have been authorized by a consistory, or have been licensed by a bishop or a Presbytery, but we baptize because Christ has said, "Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." If we come together to break bread, it is not in the name of a denomination or a court, but in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you rest any church practice upon the authority of Augustine, Chrysostom, or Calvin, or Luther, or base your faith upon some living preacher, and depend upon the force of his oratory, or upon the force of his argument, you put Christ out of His proper place. The reason why we should believe revealed truth of God is because Jesus has borne witness to it. His *ipse dixit* is the great ground of all our theology, for He is "the word of God," and His regal supremacy is the argument for obedience to His commands. Where you have no command from Christ, your teaching is nothing. Stand away, sir, you have no place here! Where you have no teaching of Christ at your back, your word is the word of man, and nothing more; it is not a word before which the subjects of King Jesus can bow themselves. If Christ is King, we receive both laws from Him, and the force which makes the law, its dominion over our consciences. If He is King, my beloved, it should be our joy to obey Him. We have nothing to do with setting up our opinions and views, and thoughts and tastes where He alone is supreme. When we turn to this good and blessed old statute book, we must do what He bids us do in it. We are not to cut, and pick, and choose, and take this and

leave the other, for the royal imprimatur is put upon every page of the Bible, and it is our part, like little children, obedient to a gentle parent, to subject our wills at once. We should, like Mary, sit at Jesus' feet to learn, and then rise and carry into practice what we have learned in so good a school.

Once more, if Jesus is King, then He is *the Captain in all our warfare.* When we fight, my brothers and sisters, if we contend after our own ways, with our own weapons, and not under the guidance of Christ, we may expect defeat; but if we follow Christ, believing the truth of God, because He has revealed it, and contending for the truth as His truth, careless of man's esteem, and only caring for the esteem of Christ, then we shall be honored of Him in the day when He shall put the laurel upon the head of the conquerors. May God grant us divine grace to be such! I am afraid that many Christians do not understand the mediatorial royalty of Christ in the church. I see so many of them acting as if they were not subjects of a King at all, but were mere bandits fighting on their own account, doing just according to their own judgment. I hear so many professors quoting this man's authority, and that. I am of the same mind as the apostle, who spoke of some of whom he said he feared lest their faith should stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of God. If it does so, you forget that your faith and everything else must stand in Christ, and that Christ must in all your graces and in all your actions be acknowledged as head over all things to His church, which is His body, or else you err, not holding the head. We are the spouse, He is the Husband: He loves and cares for us; but the wife's business is to be obedient to her lord. Let us not prove unfaithful to the marriage bond and violate the conjugal vow by being unkind, unfaithful, and disobedient to our Husband, but by His grace let us watch to know His will, make haste to do it when it is known, and always ask Him to teach us His way and guide us in His paths till He takes us to His rest. We sincerely and cheerfully acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ to be a King—our King.

II. Secondly, WE DELIGHT TO KNOW THAT OUR KING POSSESSES SUPERLATIVE BEAUTY.

There is a natural beauty which belongs to our beloved. Who can be more beautiful than God, who is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders"? There is a natural beauty in the character of Christ. Indeed, so beautiful is that character, that those who have railed most against Christianity have scarcely had the heart to say a word against Christ, and they have first been compelled to belie the narrative of His life before they could raise objections against Him. Perfect in love, goodness, and truth, never spoke man like this man. Never was there a character which could rival His matchless excellence. But the beauty intended in the text is not that of His nature and His character, but the beauty of *position.* As I told you in regard to Hezekiah, the people could see his beauty and character as well when in sackcloth as in cloth of gold, but

the beauty they were to see was the public state of royalty and happiness; and such is the beauty which we believe our Lord Jesus now has. He had this glory originally. He speaks of the glory which He had with His Father before the world was. From of old He was inconceivably great; the cherubim and seraphim hastened to obey Him who sat upon a throne, high and lifted up, whose train filled the temple. Who is like unto You, O Lord? Among the gods, who is like unto You? He was the express image of His Father's person, and the brightness of His Father's glory. And you know how He came from heaven, undressing all the way, taking off robe after robe, and jewel after jewel, till here He wrapped His Godhead in a veil of our inferior clay. He cast off even the beauty which naturally belonged to His manhood; and though He was fairer than any of the children of men, yet His visage became more marred than that of any man. You know at last how, having given His back to the scourgers, and His cheek to them who plucked off the hair, hiding not His face from shame and spitting, He at last consented that the cold seal of death should be set upon His blessed countenance; and though He saw no corruption, yet did He sleep in the somber depths of the tomb. Here was His humiliation; but, beloved, our King is now in His beauty. He was in His beauty at the moment of the resurrection, when the watchmen in terror fled far away, or, fainting, became as dead men. He somewhat hid His resurrection splendor when He sojourned for 40 days below; yet it must have been a lovely sight to see Him at Emmaus when He was known of the disciples in breaking of bread; or, again, when He took a piece of a fish and a part of a honeycomb, and did eat before them. Oh, happy was Thomas, though to be chided for his unbelief, he was privileged to put his finger into the print of the nails, and to thrust his hand into the wound of that blessed body! How that body must have sparkled with glory in the eyes of seraphs when a cloud received Him out of mortal sight, and He ascended up to heaven!

Brothers and sisters, it is yonder that the King is in His beauty; He is now crowned with the crown which God has given Him as a reward for His tremendous labors and His terrible sufferings. Now He wears the glory which He had with God before the earth existed, and yet another glory above all—that which He has well earned in the fight against sin, death, and hell. Hark how the song swells high! It is a new and sweeter song—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for He has redeemed us unto God by His blood!" Hark how the hallelujah, which went up before of old time, has a sweeter note to it, when they sing, "For You were slain." More deep and more melodious are the harpings of the harpers, and the swells of that song which is comparable to great thunders, and to the mighty waves of the sea—

"Worthy is He who once was slain,
The Prince of Peace that groaned and died;
Worthy to rise, and live, and reign
At His Almighty Father's side."

The King this day wears the beauty of an intercessor who can never fail, of a Prince who can never be defeated, of a conqueror who has vanquished every foe, of a Lord who has the heart's allegiance of every subject, of a well-beloved who is adored in the depths of all regenerate hearts. Jesus wears all the beauty which the pomp of heaven can bestow upon Him, all the glory which 10,000 times 10,000 angels can minister to Him. The chariots of the Lord are 20,000, even thousands of angels; Jesus is in the midst of them as in the Holy Place. You cannot, with your utmost stretch of imagination conceive the beauty which now adorns our King; yet, brothers and sisters, there will be a further revelation of it when He shall appear on earth in His glory, for He is yet to descend from heaven in great power. "We believe that You shall shortly come to be our Judge." We expect to see the King on earth again, it may be as a King to rule over all the nations; it may be, it must be, as a Judge to separate the people as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. Oh, the splendor of that glory! It will ravish His people's hearts, but those who in derision crowned Him, mocking, thus His gracious claim, shall weep and wail because of Him, when they shall look on Him whom they have pierced but find no salvation, seeing they rejected Him in the day of grace. Amid the splendors of that day, it shall be the joy of the Christian to see the King in His beauty. Nor is this the end, for *eternity* shall sound His praise: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever!" Forever shall Christ be fair and lovely in the esteem of His Father, in the sight of all intelligent spirits, lovely to the ends of the universe, lovely while the cycles of ages shall roll, chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely! Thus beloved, the King is arrayed in rarest beauty.

III. Furthermore, THERE ARE SEASONS WHEN WE SEE THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY.

We see the King in His beauty at this moment, not with these eyes, but with the far clearer spiritual eye of faith. Eyes are impediments to spiritual sight, faith is the true eyeball of the soul; confidence in God substantiates the things that are not seen, gives solid form and shape to that which eye has not beheld. Let me tell you briefly when some of us have seen the King in His beauty: *we saw Him in that day when He pardoned us of all our sins.* You remember it; that day when Jesus met you, and you were able to cast all your sins on Him, and see them all forgiven; did you ever see such a lovely sight before? Well do I recollect that day; well will some of you remember the time when you laid your sins on Jesus, the appointed Lamb of God. You had had many friends, but never such a friend as He. You had derived much comfort at different times, but never such comfort as He gave you. Oh, those dear wounds, that crown of thorns on His head, that blood-sprinkled person! How you could have kissed those feet! With what eagerness would you have broken the alabaster box of precious ointment, to have poured it on His head, if you could have done so! He was precious to you; He is precious now at the

bare recollection of that happy day. When the king writes the felon's pardon, how fair is his handwriting! When the King says, "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud," even the weak and bloodshot eyes of a penitent sinner can discern the inexpressible loveliness of such a gracious Lord. But, dear brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ was seen by us in His beauty more fully when, *after being pardoned, we found how much He had done for us.* You had no idea when you were first saved that there was so much in store for you; you conceived that if your sins were forgiven, it would be all you needed; but lo, you found you were made a child of God, introduced into the family of the Most High, that you were covered with a robe of righteousness, that your feet were set upon the Rock of Ages, that a new song was put into your mouth, and that you had a portion in the skies! Do you remember, some of you, when first of all, you learned the doctrine of Jesus Christ's eternal love to you? I know it came to my mind, when first I understood it, like a new discovery. Columbus, when he discovered America, could not have been so overjoyed as my heart was when I learned the lesson of those words, "Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." Oh, you saw the King in His beauty when you discovered that not only had He loved you with an everlasting love, but always would He do so; that from His bosom He never could or would divorce you; that you were His in time, and would be His in *Eternity*. Do you remember when you could grasp that glorious truth of God—

"Immutable His will,
Though dark may be my frame,
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same:
My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."

Let me say to you, beloved, the more you know about Christ, the less you are satisfied with superficial views of Him, and the more deeply you study His transactions in the everlasting covenant, His engagements on your behalf as the eternal Surety, and the fullness of His grace which shines in all His offices, the more will you be seeing the King in His beauty. Be much in such outlooks! Long more and more to see Jesus! There are times also, when, *in our contemplations,* we see His beauty. Meditation and contemplation are often like windows of agate, and gates of carbuncle, through which we see the Redeemer. Meditation puts the telescope to the eye, and enables us to see Jesus after a better sort than we could have seen Him if we had lived in the days of His flesh; for now we see not only Jesus in the flesh, but the spiritual Jesus; we see the Spirit of Jesus, the core and essence of Jesus, the very soul of the Savior. O happy are you who spend much time in contemplations! I wish that we had less to do, that we might do more of this heavenly work. Would that our conversation were more in heaven, and that we were more taken up

with the person, the work, the beauty of our Incarnate Lord. More meditation and you would better see the King in His beauty.

Beloved, it is very probable that we shall have such a sight of our glorious King as we never had before, *when we come to die.* Many saints in dying have looked up from amid the stormy waters, and have seen Jesus walking on the waves of the sea, and heard Him say, "It is I, be not afraid." I have heard expressions from some dying men and women that I never read in the best written book. They have seemed to me as if they knew more about my Master than I had ever learned, or than the old divines, or the best of writers, had ever been able to communicate. Ah, yes! When the tenement begins to shake, and the clay falls away, we see Christ through the rifts, and between the rafters the sunlight of heaven comes streaming through. But, brothers and sisters, if we want to see the King in His beauty, we must go to heaven for it, or the King must come here in His person. It may be He will spare us till He comes; but, just as likely is it that He will take us away to see Him where He is. Do you ever long for Him? Do you ever grow weary of this prison? Do you ever pant to see your beloved? Those sweet words of our hymn, do they ever come across your mind?—

"My heart is with Him on His throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away.'"

He is our Husband, and we are widowed by His absence; He is our brother sweet and fair, and we are lonely without Him. Thick veils and clouds hang between our souls and their true life—when shall the day break and the shadows flee away? When shall the veil be torn again and the glory of God be seen? When shall we leave these childish things, leave the glass in which we see our beloved darkly, and see Him face to face? Oh, long-expected day begin!

My eyes shall see the King in His beauty. As I pause over this verse, I would like to ask every hearer here whether he expects to see the King with joy? You never will unless you see Him here on earth as your Savior. You must see Him by faith in His sufferings, or else you will never see Him by sight in His beauty. Let the question go along these seats, "Shall my eyes see the King in His beauty, or, must I say with Balaam, 'I shall see Him, but not near; I shall behold Him, but not now; I shall see Him as a Judge, but His beauties shall increase my alarm; I shall flee from Him and say to the rocks and to the hills, hide me from the face of Him that sits on the throne.'" Dear hearer, I hope that will not be your dreadful lot, but look to Him this morning by faith, for He is still able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him. Cast your spirits upon His finished work this moment, and then joyfully sing—

"There shall my disimprisoned soul
Behold Him and adore;
Be with His likeness satisfied,

And grieve and sin no more.
Shall see Him wear that very flesh
On which my guilt was lain;
His love intense, His merit fresh,
As though but newly slain.
These eyes shall see Him in that day,
The God that died for me;
And all my rising bones shall say,
Lord, who is like to Thee?"

IV. THE EXCEEDING GLORY OF THIS SIGHT may well detain us for a minute or two.

I shall set out this exceeding glory to you by way of contrast. What a sight that was which Abraham beheld one morning when he lifted up his eyes "and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." I think I see the prophet all alone, gazing upon the dreadful sight. He had interceded and wrestled with God with arguments, and yet Sodom and the cities of the plain are all gone! A fire-shower has destroyed them, and their smoke darkens the sky. Can you put yourself in such a position, and on a far more terrible scale, look at the judgments of the lost, of which we are told in the book of the Revelation—"their smoke goes up forever and ever"? What a vision! And you would have been there, not as a spectator, but yourself dwelling with everlasting burnings unless love had delivered you. Contrast what you deserve, with what divine grace has prepared for you! O believer in Christ, no smoke of furnace, no terrors of devouring flame, but for you the promise—"Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty." Glory be to super abounding grace, that, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Contrast this again with another sight. The prophet Ezekiel was taken to the temple, and after seeing the image of jealousy set up, he was shown yet greater abominations; for behold, there was a hole in the wall, and within were all forms of creeping things and abominable beasts, and a voice said to the prophet, "I will show you greater abominations than these," and he saw yet filthier and fouler forms of idolatry. You and I have been like that prophet; we have had to gaze into our own hearts, and we have seen the idols there; and as we have looked longer, we have seen worse idols than we had seen before; and if your daily experience is like mine, you have often heard that mysterious voice, "Son of man, I will show you greater abominations than these." Yet, although all this inbred sin was within us, and some of it is still there, yet our eyes shall see the King in His beauty. What a change from fighting with corruption to full communion with Christ! What an exchange from a sense of sin to the perfect image of our best beloved! Rejoice exceedingly, then, dear brothers and sisters, exceedingly, when you look at the contrast.

Again, let me try to show you the great beauty of this sight by comparison. Our Lord had a very remarkable sight when He was taken up to an

exceedingly high mountain, and He was shown all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof by the evil spirit. A fair sight—you and I might be glad of the vision, though not of the temptation which followed it; but among all that was to be seen from this mount of temptation, there is nothing to equal the sight of the King in His beauty. Verily I say unto you, that all the kings of the earth, in all their splendor, with all their hosts and armies in their glittering array, are not to be compared to Him who is altogether lovely.

Compare yourself, again, with the queen of Sheba; she came from afar to see the wisdom of Solomon; but, behold, a greater than Solomon is to be seen by you. When she saw the king's riches, and his servants, and his pomp, no heart was left in her; but Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like the Savior of men. He was not worthy to be a waiting footman at the table of our great King. Even the sight that Moses saw hardly bears comparison. He looked from Pisgah upon the land that flowed with milk and honey, and he tracked the land from Lebanon's snow-crested peaks far away to the blue sea, and to the light brown desert that goes down to Egypt. With joyful eyes he beheld the cities where the tribes would dwell, and saw the hills which are round about Jerusalem; but he died, and entered not into the land. You and I see Jesus, and in that day we enter fully into possession of Him; all the milk and honey that ever flowed in Sharon's plains, or Eshcol's valleys, never could be compared for a single second to the everlasting joy and beatific blessedness that are to be found in a sight of Christ. I think our sight of Christ will be even nearer and clearer than that of John in Patmos, though that is the nearest approach to it. John saw his Master but for a season—we shall behold Him forever, and see the Savior in His own person—not a mere picture upon the camera of the imagination.

V. Lastly. From the text it appears that THIS SIGHT OF CHRIST EMINENTLY AFFORDS LIBERTY TO THE SOUL.

When we see not Christ, we cannot receive the possessions of the covenant; but when we get a view of the King in His beauty, and then we see the land that is very far off. A sight of Christ gives us a view of the dim past—a view of electing love we sweetly enjoy when we see the King in His beauty. And the future, which is dark with excessive brightness—that we also see when we see Jesus, and know that we shall be like He when we see Him as He is. If we live near to Jesus, we shall count no covenant mercy too great for Him to bestow. "He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Do any of you want to enjoy the high doctrine of eternal love? Do you desire liberty in very close communion with God? Do you long to understand mysteries? Do you aspire to know the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths? Then, beloved, you must get to see the King in His beauty. He who understands Christ, receives an anointing from the Holy One, by which he knows all things.

Christ is the great master key of all the chambers of God; there is no treasure house of God which will not open and yield up all its wealth to the soul who lives near to Jesus. O that He would dwell in my bosom! Would that He would make my heart to be His house, His dwelling place forever. Open the door, beloved hearers, and He will come into your souls. He has long been knocking, and it is this which He has wanted, that He may sup with you, and you with Him. He sups with you because you find the house or the heart, and you with Him because He brings the provision. He could not sup with you if it were not in your heart, you finding the house; nor could you sup with Him, for you have a bare cupboard, and He must bring the provision with Him. Fling wide, then, the portals of your soul. He will come with that love which you long to feel; He will come with that joy with which you cannot work your poor depressed spirit; He will bring you joy which now you have not; He will come with His flagons of wine and sweet apples, and cheer you till you shall have no other sickness but that of love over-powering, love divine! Only open the door, then, and have no other sickness than that of love. Only open the door then, to Him; drive out His enemies; give Him the keys of your heart, and He will dwell there forever, and your eyes shall see the King in His beauty.

May the Lord give His blessing to these few remarks of mine, and cause them to live in His people's souls, so that they may live near to Him and dwell in Him. You who never knew the Lord, take my word for it, you do not know what happiness is. If you have never seen my Lord, you have never seen anything worth seeing; if you have never rested in Him, you have not cast your anchor where it will hold. O hunger after Jesus! Long for Jesus! Never rest till you win Him! He is waiting to receive you—He has a great heart to receive sinners—

"He sits on Zion's hill,
And receives poor sinners still."

Do but come to Him. As for your sin and your righteousness—throw both of those away—come to Him as you are: He will never reject the soul that longs to be saved entirely by Him. May God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 33.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

NAZARETH—OR, JESUS REJECTED BY HIS FRIENDS
NO. 753

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 2, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and they led Him unto the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them He went His way." Luke 4:28-30.

JESUS had spent several years in retirement in the house of His reputed father at Nazareth. He must have been well known—the excellence of His Character and conduct must have attracted notice. In due time He left Nazareth, was baptized by John in the Jordan, and began at once His work of preaching and working wonders. The inhabitants of Nazareth, no doubt, often said to one another, "He will be sure to come home and see His parents; when He comes, we will all go to hear what the carpenter's son has to say." There is always an interest in hearing one of the lads of the village when he becomes a preacher, and this interest was heightened by the hope of seeing wonders, such as Jesus had worked at Capernaum. Curiosity was excited, everybody hoped and trusted that He would make Nazareth famous among the cities of the tribes; perhaps He would settle down there, and attract a crowd of customers to their shops by becoming the Great Physician of Nazareth, the great Wonderworker of the district. By-and-by, when it so pleased Him, the famous Prophet came to His own city, and, when the Sunday drew near, the interest grew very intense as men asked the question, "What do you think, will He be at the synagogue tomorrow? If He shall be there, He must by some means be induced to speak." The ruler of the synagogue, sharing in the common opinion, at the proper point of the service, when he saw Jesus present, took up the roll of the Prophet and passed it to Him, that He might read a passage, and then speak according to His own mind upon it. All eyes were opened; no sleepy people were in the synagogue that morning when He took the roll, unfolded it like one who was well accustomed to the Book, opened it at a passage most pertinent and applicable to Himself, read it, standing, thus paying respect to the Word by His posture; and then, when He had folded up the Book, He took His seat, not because He had nothing to say, but because it was the good practice in those days for the preacher to sit down and the hearers to stand, a method much to be preferred to the present one in some respects, at any rate when the preacher is lame, or the hearers drowsy.

The passage which Jesus read to them, I have said, was very suitable and applicable to Himself; but the most remarkable point perhaps in it was not so much what He read, as what He did not read; for He paused almost in the middle of a sentence: "To proclaim," said He, "the acceptable year of the Lord," and there He stopped. The passage is not complete unless you read the next words, "and the day of vengeance of our God." Our Lord wisely ceased reading at those words, probably wishing that the

first sermon He should deliver should be altogether gentle, and have in it not so much as a word of threatening. His heart's desire and prayer for them was that they might be saved, and that instead of a day of vengeance it might be to them the acceptable year of the Lord. So he folded the Book, sat down, and then began His exposition by opening up His own commission, He explained who the blind were, who the captives were, who the sick and wounded and bruised were, and after what sort the Grace of God had provided liberty and healing and salvation. They were all wonder struck; they had never heard anyone speak so fluently and with so much force, so simply, and yet so nobly. All eyes were fastened, and everybody was astonished at the Speaker's style and matter. Soon a buzz went round the synagogue, for each man said to his fellow, "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? From where, then, has this Man all these things?" They were astonished and envious too.

Then the Speaker, feeling that it was not the objective of His ministry to astonish people, but to impress their hearts, changed His subject, and charged with tremendous vigor upon their consciences; for if men will only give the minister their wonder, they have given him nothing. We desire you to be convicted, and converted, and short of this, we fail. Jesus turned from a subject so glowing with interest, so fruitful with every blessing, seeing that to them it was no more than pearls to swine, and He spoke to them personally, pointedly, somewhat cuttingly, as they thought. "You will surely say unto Me this proverb, Physician, heal Yourself: whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country." And then He plainly told them that He did not recognize their claims, that albeit He might have been bred in that district, and have lived with them, yet He did not recognize from that reason any obligation to display His power to suit their pleasure; and He gave an instance in point—He showed that Elijah (when God, "the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widow," would bless a widow) was not sent to bless a widow of Israel, but a Gentile woman, a Syrophenician, one of the accursed Canaanites. To none of the widows of Israel "was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman who was a widow." Then, again, He mentioned that Elisha, the servant of Elijah, when he had healing to give to lepers, did not heal Israelite lepers, he healed not even those lepers who came with the good news that the Syrian host had fled, but he healed a stranger from a far country, even Naaman.

Thus the Savior set forth the Doctrine of Sovereign Grace; thus He declared Himself to be free to do as He would with His own; and this, with other circumstances connected with the sermon, so excited the anger of the entire congregation, that those eyes which had looked upon Him with wonder at first, now began to glare like the eyes of beasts, and those tongues which were ready to have given Him applause, began to howl forth indignation. They rose up at once to slay the Preacher; the curiosity of yesterday was turned into the indignation of today; and whereas, a few hours ago they would have welcomed the Prophet to His own country, they would now think, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" too good for Him. They drag Him out of the synagogue, breaking up their own worship, forgetful of the holiness of the day to which they paid such wonderful respect, and they compelled Him forth to cast Him, as malefactors sometimes were from lofty rocks, from the brow of the hill on which their city

was built. He evaded them and escaped, but what a singular termination to such a beginning! Why, you and I would have said, What a fruitful field have we here! The best of Preachers, and one of the most desirable of audiences—a people all attentive, every ear open, almost every mouth open, so wonder-struck are they with Him, with His mode of address, and with what He has to say! There will be innumerable conversions here. Nazareth will become the stronghold of Christianity. It will be the very metropolis of the new faith. But no such thing—such is the perversity of human nature, that where we expect much, we get but little, and the field which should have brought forth wheat a hundred-fold, yields nothing but thorns and thistles.

My design is, as God may help me, to make an application of this narrative to the hearts and consciences of some now present, who are doing with the Savior somewhat in the same manner as these men of Nazareth did with Him in the days of His flesh. We shall consider, first of all, *who were these rejecters of Christ;* secondly, *why this rejection;* and thirdly, *what came of it.*

I. First, then, WHO WERE THESE REJECTORS OF CHRIST? I ask the question because I am persuaded that they have their types and representatives here at the present moment.

They were, dear Friends, first of all, *those who were nearest related to the Savior.* They were the people of His own town. Ordinarily, you would expect fellow townsmen to show a man the most kindness. He was come unto His own, and though His own received Him not, this was a subject of wonder that they should not do so. Now, there are some in this house this morning who are not Christians—they are not with Christ, and consequently they are against Him; but still they are the nearest related to Christ of any unconverted people in the world because from their childhood they have attended religious worship, they have joined in the songs, and prayers, and services of the Lord's House; moreover, they are fully persuaded of the authenticity and Divinity of the Word of God, and they have no doubt but what the Savior was sent from God, and that He can save, and is the appointed Savior. They are not troubled with doubts, skeptical thoughts do not perplex them; they are, in fact, Agrippas, almost persuaded to be Christians. They are not Christians, but they are the nearest related to Christians of any people living upon the face of the earth. You would naturally expect that they would be the best people to preach to, but they have not proved to be so. They have not proved to be so in my case, for some such attending here are less likely to be brought to a decision than those who are afar off. You know to whom I refer, for some of you, as you look me in the face, might well think, "Master, in saying so, you rebuke us also."

These people of Nazareth, again, were *those who knew most about Christ.* They were well-acquainted with His mother and the rest of His relatives. They knew His whole pedigree. They could tell at once that Joseph and Mary were of the tribe of Judah; they probably could tell why they came from Bethlehem, and how it was that they once sojourned for a while in Egypt. The whole story of the wondrous Child was known to them. Now, surely these people, not needing to be taught the rudiments, not requiring to be instructed in the very elements of the faith, must have been a very hopeful people for Jesus to preach to; but alas, they did not prove to be so! I have many here who are wonderfully like they. You know the whole story of the Savior, and have known it ever since your

childhood. More than that, the Doctrines of the Gospel are theoretically well understood by you. You can discuss Gospel Truths, and you delight to do so, for you take a deep interest in them. When you read the Scripture, it is not to you a dark, mysterious volume, which you cannot at all comprehend, but you are able to teach others what are the first principles of the Truth of God; and yet, for all that, how strangely sad it is, that, knowing so much, you should practice so little. I am afraid that some of you know the Gospel so well that for this very reason it has lost much of its power with you, for it is as well known as a thrice-told tale. If you heard it for the first time, its very novelty would strike you, but such interest you cannot now feel. It is said of Whitefield's preaching, that one reason of its great success was that he preached the Gospel to people who had never heard it before. The Gospel was to the masses of England in Whitefield's day, very much a new thing. The Gospel had been either expunged from the Church of England and from Dissenters' pulpits, or where it remained, it was with the few within the Church and was unknown to the masses outside.

The simple Gospel of "believe and live," was so great a novelty, that when Whitefield stood up in the fields to preach to his tens of thousands, they heard the Gospel as if it were a new revelation fresh from the skies. But some of you have become Gospel-hardened. It would be impossible to put it into a new shape for your ears. The angles, the corners of the Truth of God, have become worn off to you. Sundays follow Sundays, and you come up to this Tabernacle—you have been here long—you take your seats and go through the service, and it has as much become routine with you as your getting up and dressing yourselves in the morning. The Lord knows I dread the influence of routine upon myself; I fear lest it should get to be a mere form with me to deal with your souls, and I pray God He may deliver you and me from the deadly effect of religious routine. It were better if some of you would change your place of worship, rather than sleep in the old one. Go and hear somebody else, if you have heard me long and obtained no blessing. Rather than get in those pews and perish under the Word, lulled by the Gospel which is meant to awaken you, go elsewhere, and let some other voice speak to your ears, and let some other preacher see what God may do by him. O may the Spirit of God but save you, and it shall be equal joy to me whether you are saved under someone else, or under my own word. Yet here is the matter—it is sad indeed that men so nearly related to Christianity, who know so much about Christ, should yet reject the Redeemer.

Again, these were people *who supposed that they had a claim upon Christ.* They did not feel that it would be a great kindness on the part of the Lord Jesus to heal their sick. They no doubt argued, "He is a Nazareth man, and of course He is, in duty, bound to help Nazareth." They considered themselves as being in a sort His proprietors, who could command Him to help them. I have sometimes feared that you who are children of godly parents, or seat-holders, or subscribers to various religious objects, in your hearts imagine that if any are to be saved, surely it must be yourselves, yet your claim has no basis to rest upon. I would to God that you were not only almost, but altogether saved, every one of you; but perhaps the very fact that you think you have a claim upon Divine Grace, may be the stone which lies in your path, because you think, "Surely Jesus Christ will cast an eye of favor upon *us*, even if others perish!" I tell you He will do as He wills with His own, and publicans and

harlots will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven before some of you, if you think that you have any right to mercy; for the Mercy of God is God's Sovereign Gift, and He will have you know it to be so. He has said it, said it as with a voice of thunder, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." If you kick against His Sovereignty, you shall stumble at a stone upon which you shall be broken. Oh, but if you can feel you have no claim upon God, if you can put yourself into the position of the publican who dared not lift up so much as his eyes towards Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," you are in a position in which God can bless you consistently with the dignity of His own Sovereignty! O take up the position which Grace accepts. Beggars, and such you must be, must not be choosers. He who asks for Grace must not set himself up to dictate to his God; he who would be saved, though he is unworthy, must come to God upon the footing of a suppliant, and humbly plead that for mercy's sake, the Lord's Love would be manifested towards him.

I fear that there may be a spice of this kind of spirit in the minds of some of you, and if so, you are the people who have rejected Christ. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O Earth! We call the skies, and the round earth to witness, here are those who are near to being Christians, who know the Gospel by the letter of it, and they think they have a claim upon the Savior, and yet they remain disobedient to the Divine Command, "Believe and live." They turn upon their heels and reject the Savior, and will not come unto Him that they might have life. Hear it, I say, O heavens, and be astonished, O Earth!

II. Secondly, we are to explain the reasons WHY THEY THUS REJECT THE MESSIAH.

The reasons will be applicable to some of you, you unconverted people, who are sitting here. Sometimes the Spirit of God comes with a melting power over an audience, and makes men feel the Truth which is meant for them. Pray, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that such may be the case now; that our unconverted friends, who give us so much concern because of their enmity to Jesus, may be impressed with the remonstrances now addressed to them. Why did they reject Christ? I think they did so under a very complex feeling, not to be accounted for by one circumstance. Several things went to make up their wrath and enmity. The fire of their anger fed upon several kinds of fuel.

In the first place, I should not wonder but what the groundwork of their dissatisfaction was laid in *the fact that they did not feel themselves to be the persons to whom the Savior claimed to have a commission.* Observe, He said, in the 18th verse, that He was, "anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor." Now, the poorest ones in the synagogue may have felt pleased at that; but as it was almost a maxim with the Jewish doctors that it did not matter what became of the poor—for few but the rich could enter Heaven—the very announcement of a Gospel for the poor must have sounded to them awfully democratic and extreme, and must have laid in their minds the foundation of a prejudice. He meant, of course, the "poor in spirit," whether they are poor in pocket or not, for those are the poor whom Jesus comes to bless; but the use of expressions so contrary to all that they had been accustomed to hear made them bite their lips, while they said within themselves, "We are not poor in spirit; have not we kept the Law?" Did not some of them say, "We have worn our phylacteries and made broad the borders of our garments; we

have not eaten except with washed hands; we have strained out all gnats from our wine; we have kept the fasts, and the feasts, and we have made long prayers, why should we feel any poverty of spirit?" Therefore they felt there was nothing in Christ's mission for them.

When He next mentioned the broken-hearted, they were not at all conscious of any need of a broken heart. They felt heart-whole, self-satisfied, perfectly content. What is the use of a preacher? Who is to preach to the broken-hearted when all his hearers feel that they have no cause to rend their hearts with repentance? Then when He spoke of captives, they claimed to have been born free and not to have been in bondage to any man; they rejected with scorn the very idea that they needed any liberator, for they were as free as free could be. When Jesus further spoke of the blind—"Blind!" they said, "does He insult us? We are far-seeing men! Let Him go and preach to some of the outcasts who have become blind, but as for us, we can see into the very depths of all mysteries. We need no instruction and opening of eyes from Him." When at last He spoke of those who had been bruised, as though they had been beaten with stripes for their sins—"We have no sins," they said, "for which we should be bruised; we have been honorable, upright people, and never have been chastened by the scourge of the Law; we need no liberty for them that are bruised. What is the acceptable year of the Lord to us, if it is only for bruised captive ones? We are not such."

At a glance you perceive, my Brothers and Sisters, the reason why in these days Jesus Christ is rejected by so many Church-going and Chapel-going people. Here you see the reason why so many of your respectable attendants at our places of worship reject Salvation by Grace—it is because they do not feel that they need a Savior. They think that they are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; but they know not that they are naked, and poor, and miserable. They claim to be intelligent, thoughtful, and enlightened; they do not know that until a man sees Christ he walks in darkness and is stone blind, and beholds no light. They are not bruised, they say. Would to God they were! God perhaps has left them because it was of no use to bruise them; and why should they be struck any more? They only revolt more and more because they feel no smarts of conscience, no terrors of God's Law, therefore Jesus Christ is a root out of a dry ground to them. They despise Him, as the healthy man laughs at the physician, and as the man that is rich cares not for the alms of the benevolent. Ah, but my dear Friends, let me remind you that if you do not feel your need of a Savior, the need exists for all that! You were born in sin and shaped in iniquity, and no baptismal waters can wash away your defilement. Beside this, you have sinned from your youth up in heart, and word, and thought—and you are condemned already because you have not believed on the Son of God.

Although you may not have been openly wicked, yet there is a text which I must bring to your remembrance—"The wicked shall be turned into Hell with all the nations that forget God." That last list includes *you*, my Hearer—you who forget, and postpone, and trifle, who wait for "a more convenient season." It includes you who live with the Gospel before you, and yet do not comply with its commands, but say to your sins, "I love you too well to repent of you," and to your self-righteousness, "I am too fond of this foundation to leave it to build upon the foundation which God has laid in the Person of His dear Son." Ah, my dear Hearers, it is the self-conceit which makes the empty bag think itself full, which makes

the hungry man dream that he has feasted and is satisfied. It is self-righteousness which damns the souls of thousands. There is nothing as ruinous as this presumptuous self-confidence. I pray the Lord may make you feel yourself to be undone, ruined, lost, cast away, and then there is no fear of your rejecting Christ, for he who is perfectly bankrupt is willing to accept a Savior; he who has nothing of his own falls flat before the Cross, and takes gladly the "all things" which are stored up in the Lord Jesus. This is the first and perhaps the greatest reason why men reject the Savior.

But, secondly, I entertain little doubt but what the men of Nazareth were angry with Christ because of *His exceedingly high claims.* He said, "The Spirit of Jehovah is upon Me." They started at that. Yet they might be willing to admit that He was a Prophet, and so, if He meant it in that sense, they would be patient, but when He said, "The Lord has anointed Me to preach," and so on, claiming to be no other than the promised Messiah, they shook their heads, and murmuringly said, "He claims too much." When He placed Himself side by side with Elijah and Elisha, and claimed to have the same rights and the same spirit as those famous ones, and by inference compared His hearers to the worshippers of Baal in Elijah's day, then they felt as if He set Himself up too high, and put them down too low. And here, again, I see another master reason why so many of you good people, as you would be thought to be, reject my Lord and Master. He sets Himself too high—He asks too much of you—He puts you down too low. He tells you, you must be nothing, and He must be everything. He tells you that you must give up that idol god of yours, the world, and the pleasures of it, and that *He* must be your Master, and not your own wills. He tells you that you must pluck out the right eye of pleasure, if it comes in the way of holiness, and cut off the right arm of profit rather than commit sin. He tells you that you must take up your cross and follow Him outside the camp, leaving the world's religion and the world's irreligion, being no longer conformed to the world, but become in a sacred sense a Nonconformist to all its vanities and maxims, customs and sins. He tells you that *He* must be the Prince Imperial in your souls, and that you must be His willing servants and His loving disciples.

These are claims too high for human nature to yield to them; and yet, dear Hearer, remember that if you *do not* yield to them, a much worse thing awaits you. Kiss the Son, kiss His scepter now, I say. Now bow down and acknowledge Him, for if not, beware "lest He be angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little." Those who kiss not the scepter of silver shall be broken with the rod of iron! They who will not have Christ to reign over them in love shall have Him to rule over them in terror in the day when He puts on the garments of vengeance and dyes His vesture in the blood of His foes. O acknowledge Him as He is covered with His own blood, lest you have to acknowledge Him when He is covered with yours! Accept Him while you may, for you will not be able to escape from Him when those eyes, which are like eyes of fire, shall flash devouring flames upon His adversaries! Alas, this is a fruitful source of mischief to the sons of men! They cannot give King Jesus His due, but would gladly thrust the Lord of Glory into a corner. Oh, base hearts to kick against so dear, so great, so good a King!

Thirdly, another reason might be found in the fact that *they were not for receiving Christ until He had exhibited some great wonder.* They craved

for miracles. Their minds were in a sickly state. The Gospel, which they did need, they would not have; the miracles which He did not choose to give, they eagerly demanded. Oh, how many there are nowadays who must see signs and wonders, or else they will not believe! I know you, young woman, you have set this in your heart before you, "I must feel as John Bunyan felt—the same horror of conscience, the same gloom of soul, or else I will never believe in Jesus." But what if you never should feel it, as probably you never may? Will you go to Hell out of spite with God, because He will not do for you just what He did for another? A young man yonder has said to himself, "If I had a dream, as I hear So-and-So had, or if there should happen to me some very remarkable event in Providence which should just meet my taste; or if I could feel today some sudden shock of I know not what, then I would believe." Thus you dream that my Lord and Master is to be dictated to by you! You are beggars at His gate, asking for mercy, and you must draw up rules and regulations as to how He shall give that mercy! Do you think that He will ever submit to this? My Master is of a generous spirit, but He has a right royal heart, and He spurns all dictation and maintains His Sovereignty of action.

But why, dear Hearer, do you crave for signs and wonders? Is it not enough of a wonder that Jesus bids you trust Him, and promises that you shall be saved at once? Is not this enough of a sign that God has proposed so wise a Gospel as that of, "Believe, and live"? Is not this enough—is not the Gospel its own sign, its own wonder, and its own proof, because he that believes has everlasting life? Is not this a miracle of miracles, that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish"? Surely that precious Word, "Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely," and that solemn Promise, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in nowise cast out," are better than signs and wonders. A truthful Savior ought to be believed. He never did lie. Why will you ask proof of the veracity of One who cannot lie? The devils themselves declared him to be the Son of God; and will you stand out against Him? Sovereign, Mighty, Irresistible Grace, come and conquer this wickedness in the hearts of men, and make them willing to trust Jesus, whether they see signs and wonders or not!

Again, and perhaps this time I may hit the head of the nail in some cases, though I suppose not in many in this place—part of the irritation which existed in the minds of the men of Nazareth was caused by *the peculiar Doctrine which the Savior preached upon the subject of Election.* I question whether that was not at bottom the real sting of the whole matter; He laid it down that God had a right to dispense His favors just as He pleased; that in doing so He often selected the most unlikely objects; that for instance, a widow in idolatrous Sidon, had her needs supplied in famine, while the widows of Israel were left without food; that at another time under Elisha, when God would heal a leper, He left the Israelite lepers to die, but a leper who came from the idolatrous land of Assyria, and who had been accustomed to bow in the house of Rimmon received healing. Now, they did not like this, and I suppose even in this congregation, though you are pretty well accustomed to strong statements upon the Sovereignty of God, and we are not ashamed to preach Predestination and Election as clearly as we preach any Doctrine, yet there are some who are mightily uneasy when the Doctrine is preached, and feel as if

they could almost slay the preacher, because the Doctrine is so offensive to human nature.

Everywhere you will notice that the church of Rome has not half the hatred to Lutheranism that it has to Calvinism. It is the Doctrine of Grace, which is the soul of Calvinism, that is the poison of Popery; Rome cannot endure the Truth that God will save where He wills; that He has not given salvation into the hands of priests, nor given it to our own merit or our own will to save us. God holds the keys of the treasury of Divine Grace, and distributes as He pleases. This is the Doctrine which makes men so angry, that they know not what to say of it; but, my dear Hearer, I trust this is not the reason why *you* refuse to believe in Jesus, for if it is, it is a most foolish reason, for while this is true, there is yet another Truth that, "Whoever believes in Jesus Christ, shall not perish." While it is true that the Lord will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, it is equally true that He wills to have mercy, and has already had mercy on every soul that repents of its sin, and puts its trust in Jesus. Why quibble at a Truth of God because you cannot understand it? Why kick against the pricks to your own wounding, when the pricks remain as sharp as ever, and will not be moved by all your kicking? The Lord of Hosts has purposed it to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the excellence of the earth: "It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." The Lord will bring down the high tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree to flourish, that no flesh may glory in His Presence, so that the Lord may be exalted. Bow, then, to Sovereign Grace! Should He not be King? Who else should rule but God? And if He is a King, has He not a right to forgive the felon condemned to die, and yet give no reason to you? Leave that question, and all others, and come to Jesus, whose open arms invite you. He says, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you wait till you have solved all difficulties, you will never come at all. If you refuse Christ till you understand all mysteries, you will perish in your sins. Come while the gate is opened and while the lamp holds out to burn, for He has said it, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in nowise cast out."

I must still mention another reason for the quarrel of the Nazarenes with our Lord. It was probably because *they loved not such plain, personal speaking as the Savior gave them.* Some hearers affect great delicacy. You must not call a spade a "spade." It is an "agricultural implement," and only to be spoken of in dainty terms. But our Lord used no fine talk. He was a plain speaking Man, and He spoke to men plainly. He knew that men would go to Hell, let Him be as plain as He might, and therefore He would not let them have the excuse that they could not understand the Preacher. He put the Truth of God so clearly that not only could they understand it, but they could not *misunderstand* it if they tried. His preaching was most personal. "*You* will say." He did not speak about Capernaum, but all about Nazareth, and this also helped to make them angry.

Once again, *He gave a hint that He meant to bless the Gentiles.* Elijah had fed and Elisha had healed a Gentile, and this undoubted fact made the Jew set his teeth, for he feared that the monopoly of blessing was to cease, and that gifts of Divine Grace were to be given to others besides the sons of Israel. A Gentile dog was to be admitted into the family, to be permitted not only to eat the crumbs that fell from the table, but to be

changed into a child—the Jews could not bear it. Now, there is a great deal of this monopolizing spirit among self-righteous people. Why I have heard people say—shocked I have been to hear it—"Oh, they are having meetings for getting together these girls off the street. It is no use—you may try, but it is no use trying to reform them. And then here are other people looking after these low characters, going into those nasty back slums. Well, if people get there, they ought to be there; we ought not to lower ourselves to look after such good-for-nothing people. There is the Church, if they do not choose to go, let them stay away." As to going after the very lowest, some people turn up their noses at the very idea of it. This is just the horrible old Jewish monopolizing of the Gospel; as if these people were not as good as you, for all their sins and for all their poverty; for though their vice may happen to be outward, it is not a whit more detestable than the pride of some people who make a boast of a self-righteousness which does not exist. I do not know which God looks upon with the greater abhorrence—the open sinner or the openly good living person whose inward pride stands out against the Gospel. It matters nothing to the physician whether he sees the eruption outside the skin or knows it to be inside; perhaps he thinks it may be harder to get at the second than at the first.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ will have you to know, however good you are, that you must come to Him just as the vilest of the vile must come. You must come as guilty—you cannot come as righteous; you must come to Jesus to be washed; you must come to Him to be clothed. You think you do not need washing; you fancy you are clothed, and covered, and beautiful to look upon; but oh, the garb of outward respectability, and of outward morality often is nothing but a film to hide an abominable leprosy till God's Grace changes the heart! God requires truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part He will make us to know wisdom; but this superficial England of ours is perfectly satisfied with outside gentility, and you may be as rotten as you will within the heart. The living God will have no pretense, you must be born-again. This Doctrine, too, is one which people cannot endure, and all hard things will they say of the preacher, and for this reason they reject Christ, but in so doing they reject their own mercy, they reject the only hope of Heaven, and they seal their own destruction.

I wish the time did not fly quite so rapidly when I have such a subject as this. I seem to have the consciences of some of you here, and I am hammering away as with a big sledge hammer, but I am afraid there is very little effect produced because the iron is cold. O that the Lord would thrust you into the furnace, and make you like melted iron! Then the hammer of the Gospel and the Law together might well beat you into something like an evangelical shape, and you might be saved. God's arm is strong enough, God's fire is fierce enough to melt even the iron of self-righteousness!

III. And now, WHAT CAME OF IT?

This came of it. First of all, *they thrust the Savior out of the synagogue,* and then they tried to hurl Him down the brow of the hill. These were His friends, good, respectable people—who would have believed it of them? You saw that goodly company in the synagogue who sang so sweetly, and listened so attentively, would you have guessed that there was a murderer inside every one of their coats? It only needed the opportunity to bring the murderer out; for there they are all trying to throw Jesus off the cliff!

We do not know how much devil there is inside any one of us; if we are not renewed and changed by Divine Grace, we are heirs of wrath even as others. The description which is given in Romans, that Second Chapter, that awful Chapter, is a truthful picture of every child of Adam. He may look respectable; he may seem to be a lamb, and to be so quiet that a weaned child might play in the cockatrice's den; but he is a deadly cockatrice for all that. The snake may sleep, and you may play with it, but let it wake, and you will see that it is a deadly thing. Sin may lie dormant in the soul, but there may come a time when it will wake up; and there may come a time in England when those good people who hang on to the hem of Christ, and attend our places of worship, may actually develop into persecutors. It was once so in England. The people who used to hear the Gospel at the close of Henry the Eighth's day—the people who were so pleased to hear Hugh Latimer under Edward the Sixth, were quite as ready to carry firewood under Queen Mary, and to burn the servants of the Lord.

My dear Friends, your opposition to Christ may not take that active form, but unless you are converted you are enemies to Jesus. You deny it! I ask you why then do you not believe in Him? Why do you not trust Him? You are not opposed to Him, why do not you yield to Him? As long as you do not trust Him, I can only set you down as His enemy. You give this clearest proof of it, that you will not even be saved by Him. If there were a man drowning, and another man put out his hand, and he said, "No, I will not be saved by you, I would sooner be drowned," what a proof that would be of enmity! What proof could be more sure? That is your case, you refuse to be saved by Christ's Grace. Oh, what an enemy of Christ at the bottom of your heart you must be!

But what came of it? Why, though they thus thrust Him out, *they could not hurt the Savior.* The hurt was all their own. Christ did not fall from the hill; He escaped by His miraculous Power; and the Gospel will not be hurt even though you reject it, and do *worse* than reject it—and set yourself in opposition to it. Jesus Christ glides through the midst of His enemies uninjured. Through the persecutions of Nero and Diocletian, the true Christ of God went on His way. Through all the burnings of Mary, and the hangings of Elizabeth, right on through the times of Claverhouse and his dragoons, the good old Gospel remained unconquered by its foes. It abides still to this very day the same—it escapes from all the anger of its most virulent foes. But what became of them? Well, they had rejected Christ, and He left them, left them unhealed because of their unbelief. That will be your case. And now it is 1,860 years ago, and the souls of all those men of Nazareth have appeared before the Judgment Seat; and in a few more years, when the great trumpet shall sound, all those men who tried to throw Christ down over the cliff will have to look at Him; and they will see Him seated where they cannot grasp Him, nor abuse Him, nor cast Him down. What a sight it will be for them! Will they say to one another, "Is not this Joseph's son?" When they see Him sitting on the Throne of His Glory, and all His holy angels with Him, will they say, "His mother, is she not with us, and His brothers and his sisters?" Will they then say to Him, "Physician, heal Yourself"? Oh, what a change will come over those brazen brows! How for every sneer there will be a blush, and for each word of anger there will be cries, and weeping, and wailings, and gnashing of teeth!

My Hearers, the same thing will happen to you. Within a few more years, you and I will have mixed our bones with mother earth, and then after that shall come a general resurrection, and we shall live and stand in the latter days upon the earth, and Christ will come in the clouds of Heaven, and you who heard the Gospel and despised Him, what will you say? Have your apology ready, for you will soon be called upon to say why judgment should not be pronounced upon you. You cannot say you did not know the Gospel, or that you were not warned of the result of rejecting it: you have known, what more could you have known? But your heart would not receive what you knew. When the Lord begins to say, "Depart, you cursed," what claim will you have not to be numbered with that accursed company? It will be in vain to say, "We have eaten and drunk in Your Presence, and You have taught in our streets," for that will be an aggravation that the Kingdom of Heaven came so near unto you, and yet you received it not. And when the thunderbolts are launched, and He who was once the Lamb so full of Mercy shall shine forth as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, full of Majesty, that thunderbolt shall be winged with extra force and speed with this tremendous fact—that you rejected Christ, that you heard Him, but turned a deaf ear to Him; that you neglected the great salvation, and did despite to the Spirit of Grace.

As I cannot even hope to find words that can have the force of God's own language, I shall close this sermon by reading you these few words which I beg you to lay to your heart. They are in the First Chapter of Proverbs, at the 24th verse: "Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would have none of My reproof: I, also, will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes; when your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

God save you from that curse.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 4:16-44.

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the Grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and more than 500 Spanish translations, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE SAINT AND THE SPIRIT
NO. 754

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING JUNE 9, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you."
John 14:17.

THE Holy Spirit, although He is the most active, most potent, and most real worker in the world, is not discerned by the mass of mankind. The great majority of men are affected only by what they see, or hear, or feel; their life is confined to the narrow range of their senses. "What shall we eat?" or, "What shall we drink?" or, "With what shall we be clothed?"—these are the trinity of questions which absorb the attention and effort of the worldly. If they can see a thing, they believe in it; if they can hear the sound of it, they recognize it; if they can discern its shape, they put it down as real: they know not that the things which are seen are temporal, and therefore shadowy, and that the things which are not seen are the only substantial things, because they exist forever. There they are, owlets fluttering in darkness, earthworms confined to their groveling sphere, mere moles burrowing in the dark earth; they have no eagle wing to bear them aloft, no eagle eyes with which to see afar off. Because the Holy Spirit is neither seen with the eyes nor heard with the ear, therefore the world cannot receive Him because it sees Him not, neither knows Him. There are a few nobler spirits in the world whose souls are above mere dead matter, who mount into the spirit-world, in a certain sense; they recognize the existence of the soul, and believe in its immortality and grandeur, but still, never having believed in the Spirit of God, their eyes are blind to the first and chief of spiritual beings. Whatever else they see, they see not Him, and though they hear some voices from the land unknown, yet they hear not the divine voice; celestial influences pass over them as sound through a forest which stirs not so much as a single leaf, no power or passion of their spirit being moved by the Holy One of Israel. They can think of things sublime, and philosophize upon spiritual topics; their theories are plausible, and sometimes they speak as though they were among the number of God's enlightened, but still, having no faith, they are without the Holy Spirit; and feeling none of His divine energy, they have no life in Him, no love to Him, and the affections not being moved, none of the other powers yield to the mighty influence of the glorious Spirit of the living God.

Beloved friends, the vital distinction between the man of God and the man of the world is this: the man of God knows the Holy Spirit, for He is

with him and dwells in him; but the man of the world knows not the Holy Spirit; he may know His name, but he is not *personally* acquainted with that glorious One, because he sees Him not, neither knows Him. Mere outward distinctions, such as may be caused by baptism or the participation of the Lord's Supper, are nothing at all, apart from the Holy Spirit. Mere nominal distinctions, caused by wearing the name of "Christian," or the name of Muslim, are just superficial, surface works; but if you know the Holy Spirit, you are a new creature in Christ Jesus; you have passed from death unto life, you shall never come into condemnation. If you know not the Spirit, then you are carnal and sensual, and not having the Spirit you are dead in sin; you have not the Spirit which quickens, and the flesh can profit you nothing. Whatever you may have attained in depth of knowledge, or in excellence of morality, or in boldness of profession, you have foolishly begun to build your house at the top instead of at the bottom, and your house, lacking a foundation, will fall to pieces; and all your building shall be but as the card house of little children, or the sand-built tower of the fool which falls in the day of the storm.

The great question which I want to raise in every heart this morning will be this: Do you know the Spirit of God? Does He dwell with you? Is He in you? If you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of His: but if the Spirit is in you, the body indeed is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is Life because of righteousness. You are a living child of God if the Spirit of God dwells in you, but without Him you are dead while you live. In trying to show this morning, so far as our poor powers can show, what it is the believer knows of the Holy Spirit, I shall first say that *the believer knows the Holy Spirit by virtue of His operations;* secondly, and better still, *he knows the Holy Spirit by virtue of His personal indwelling;* and, thirdly, that *the believer shall know the Holy Spirit yet better,* for the text says, He "shall be in you."

I. First, the Holy Spirit is known to believers, and is with believers THROUGH HIS OPERATIONS IN THEM AND UPON THEM.

My brothers and sisters, *we have seen the operations of the Holy Spirit in the church at large.* It was the Holy Spirit who at the very first formed the church; it is He who called out the chosen ones, quickened them, made them living stones fit to be built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit; it is He who binds these living stones together, for all Christian unity comes from Him as the Spirit of peace, the Holy Dove proceeding from the Father. The first manifest dedication and consecration of the church of the Lord Jesus was at Pentecost; and here the Holy Spirit was the great active agent. You have not forgotten those words, "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." On that day the ascended Savior, having obtained gifts for men, fulfilled that an-

cient promise pronounced by the mouth of the Prophet Joel, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." There had been no church of God composed of Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia, if the Spirit of God had not then been poured out upon the first few hundred chosen souls, that they might be messengers of mercy unto others, to bring in the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Since then, dear friends, the Holy Spirit has been a gracious Agent in supplying the church with her ministry. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. "And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another many kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these works that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teaches, on teaching; or he that exhorts, on exhortation; he that gives, let him do it with simplicity; he that rules, with diligence; he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness." In all our efforts let us depend upon divine power, for without it we are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. The gentle dews of Barnabas are useless without the dew of the Spirit, and Boanerges' thunder is all in vain unless the lightening of the Holy Spirit shall go with it.

Brothers and sisters, the more than golden treasure of the church is the Holy Spirit. The treasury of the church is not under the lock and key of the State; her chests of wealth are not to be opened by the power of the policeman or by an Act of Parliament; the true treasury of the church is not even found in the gold and silver which may voluntarily be given to her; but in the power and energy of the Holy Spirit are the riches of the church of God. That is a rich church which shall meet in a barn or under the blue vault of heaven if the Holy Spirit is there; but that is a poor church with "Ichabod" legibly written across its wall, which, with all its wealth, its intelligence, and its respectability, is devoid of the Spirit of the living God. This is the church's power, her energy, her life, the earnest of her future glory, the present power by which she is to resist and conquer her foes.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church is as manifest to many of us as any other great fact can possibly be. Even when we have doubted whether we, ourselves, possessed the Spirit, we have been charmed to see His work in others. We have seen conversions, which nothing but Omnipotence could have worked; We have seen graces exemplified in Christians which unaided human nature could not have produced; We

have seen virtues in our fellows which we have delighted to admire; We have coveted earnestly the good gifts God has given to them; we have not envied them nor sought to make their excellences to appear less beauteous than they are—on the contrary, we have seen, to the honor and praise of God, such virtues and excellences in believers as have compelled us to feel that the Holy Spirit is still in the midst of His people.

Thus we know the Holy Spirit because we can distinctly recognize His action in the church of God. We can discern it on every page of history; we see it in our own times; we have seen it graciously in revivals, we hope to see it yet more; and, as a church, meeting in this place, I am sure we can bear our testimony, even thousands of us, that the Holy Spirit has been here, blessing us indeed and of a truth.

But, beloved, no man knows the Holy Spirit to any great extent by mere observation of His work in the church. Let me come closer to your souls and deal more personally with your inward experiences. The only way to know the Holy Spirit is by feeling Him at work in *your own souls*. Now, the works of the Holy Spirit within a regenerate man or woman are very many. It is not possible for me to mention them all, but at the commencement let me say that the most of them find an illustration in the work of the Holy Spirit upon the person of our Lord, who is our Covenant Head and Representative. What the Spirit did for Jesus, the Mediator, the head of the body, He repeats after the manner and the measure of each man in each member of the body of Christ. The same oil bedews the skirts of the garment as that which fell so copiously upon the head; the same Spirit descends to the very meanest Christian as that which was upon Christ, the anointed One of God.

Now, you will remember that the Holy Spirit was concerned in the very birth of our Lord on earth. The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God." Our Lord was born into this world through the marvelous, mysterious, secret operation of the divine Spirit. He was born of the Virgin Mary, but He is the Son of the Highest. Our Lord might have addressed the Holy Spirit and said, "A body have You prepared Me." Beloved, anything like a new birth in you and me is also of the Holy Spirit. Christ was not born at Bethlehem without the Spirit of God, neither is He born in our hearts. The Christ in the manger is begotten by the Holy Spirit, and the Christ in every humble heart comes there by the same divine agency. In us Christ must be conceived; in us Christ must be formed; and this it is that Paul longed for when he said, "I travail in birth till Christ is formed in you the hope of glory." It is the Spirit's work, then, to bring Christ to any one of us, and to make us to know Christ; and every good desire towards Jesus, much less every real reception of Jesus into the soul is the work of the Spirit of grace.

When our Lord was grown up, and had come to those years in which He exercised His public ministry, although He was baptized by man with

water, He was also baptized with the Holy Spirit. In the midst of Jordan, you will remember, when He was fulfilling all righteousness, He saw the heavens opened, and lo, the Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove, and did rest upon Him. That was His consecration to His work; that was the anointing which commissioned and qualified Him as the servant of God. He was that day publicly and effectually set apart by the Holy Spirit to be distinctly the great Captain of our salvation, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. Beloved, it is thus that you and I must be separated from the world by the Holy Spirit resting upon us; with all His dove-like influences He must descend into our souls, that from then on we may not serve sin, but become the servants of God. It is only in the power of His divine anointing that we can have power to minister in the Lord's house as the sent servants of the Master of the household.

Then, in Jesus Christ's three and a half years of ministry, the power by which He worked miracles, and the power by which He preached, is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself said that He cast out devils by the Spirit of God—it was His own declaration. So, albeit that as God He could work what miracles He willed, yet He chose to use the divine power of the Holy Spirit of God in the working of many of His wonders. beloved, you have not forgotten the famous text of His sermon at Nazareth, which is appropriate to the point in hand, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Did the Master work in the power of the Spirit of God, and shall not the servants do so? If you would work such works as Christ did, you must work them in the power which Christ bestowed so abundantly on His church when He ascended to His Father. If you would be wonder-workers here on earth to awaken the dead, to open blind eyes, and to set at liberty the captives—and to this you are ordained in your measure even as He was, every one of you—then you must have the power of the Holy Spirit resting upon you, for only by that power can you lead the life of Christ on earth.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is sometimes in Scripture ascribed to the Holy Spirit. You will recollect that passage in the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, at the 11th verse: here you are promised that the same power which "raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies." Our resurrection from the death of sin is worked in us by the Holy Spirit. There is no rising out of the grave of sin unless the voice shall say, "Lazarus, come forth," and with that voice, there must go that Irresistible life-giving power without which the dead in sin will remain dead until they corrupt and are cast into hell, where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched.

See then, beloved, from the birth of Christ to His resurrection, He was pleased to put honor upon the Holy Spirit by receiving abundantly of His power. He was anointed as man with the oil of gladness above His fel-

lows; and though able as God to have done as He pleased, independently, yet in order that the unity of the blessed Trinity might be manifest to us, Christ went not without His Father's sending, and spoke not His own words, but His Father's words; and so the power which rested upon Him, which He chose to use, was the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, as the strength of the head, so must the strength of the members be: as the head was anointed of the Spirit, so must the members be anointed in like manner; as the head rose from the dead, so must the members rise by the same power—by the energy of that holy Comforter who has been shed abroad upon the people of God, by virtue of the Lord Jesus Christ's ascension, we must be sustained and perfected, that the many Brethren may in all things be made like to the Elder Brother. There is much more in this illustration than I can bring forth, therefore I leave it with you as a goodly dish to feed upon at your leisure.

In enlarging upon the operations of the blessed Spirit, dear friends, if you and I know the Spirit of God at all, we shall know Him first as having operated upon us *to convict us of our sin.* I trust I shall never be second to anyone in preaching plainly that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life, yet I cannot but think that many, in their over-zeal for preaching up the simplicity of faith, have fallen into grievous error by disparaging repentance of sin, and setting at nothing all idea of a sinner's coming to Jesus because sin has become loathsome and unbearable. Beloved, no one ever did come to Christ nor ever will until he feels his need of Jesus Christ. Though it is the duty of the minister to preach the gospel to every sinner, yet that gospel never can be and never will be of any value to a soul until that soul is emptied of self, made to see its sin and to abhor it. Now, if ever you and I have spied out our disease, have seen the blotches of our spiritual leprosy, have been made to know that it is more than skin-deep, and lies far down in the very core of our being, if ever we have been made to feel that the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint (and I am sure we must feel this before we can savingly put our trust in Jesus), this is the finger of God, this is the work of the Spirit of God in the soul. "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall convince the world of sin." And if you have been convicted of sin, the Spirit of God has come to you. There is no Convicter like the Spirit. beloved, *I* may tell you of your sins—I do try to do so as plainly as I know; I may set before you the heinousness of sin as against a just, and holy, and merciful God; I may try to show you the bitterness of sin in its eternal results, but all this is nothing until the Holy Spirit comes—and then, without words or with them, by whichever way He chooses to act, He can make your soul shake; He can make your whole heart quiver till rottenness enters into your bones. I pray God that all of us may feel this in such a measure as He may think fit to show it to us; but you will never doubt the existence of the Holy Spirit after such an experience of His power as a consuming fire and a rushing mighty wind. When He wields the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, and drives that sword through

you again, and again, and again, you will know Him beyond a question! When He takes the great sledge hammer of the law, and breaks you in pieces, and pounds you like wheat in a mortar with the pestle, you will never have doubts about His power! You will know Him, for He is with you and has bowed you in the dust by His presence.

But next, if you know the Holy Spirit, you will also know Him as *the great revealer of Christ.* There is the serpent lifted up on the pole in the midst of the sin-bitten dying host; but, brothers and sisters, many may die, albeit that the bronze serpent is within view, unless someone shall direct their eyes to the spot. How many have I known, who, when they have been told about Christ and the plan of salvation, have said, "Where is He?" and they have turned their poor bewildered glances everywhere except to the right place, and even when their eyes have had a little light, they have been looking for quite another Christ than the One who is set before them in the gospel. Oh, I remember how long I looked for Christ, but could not find Him, and when at last I did spy Him, I perceived how near He was while my eyes were looking a long way off for Him, looking up into heaven or into my own soul; but of this I am conscious at this moment, that I never could under any ministry have been enabled to spy out my Lord Jesus, if it had not been that the Holy Spirit cast a ray of light upon Christ, and opened my eyes so that I could perceive Him. It is our duty to set forth Christ very plainly, manifestly, crucified, in the congregation; but Jesus Christ is never seen by any light which comes from either the minister or his hearer—the light must come from the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit shines full upon the crown of thorns and the five wounds and the mournful countenance of the Man of Sorrows, oh, how the wounds glisten, and how fair is Jesus to a poor sinner's tearful eyes! But without that light of God, a man may sit at the foot of the cross and see nothing, and even die in his darkness and sin. Brothers and sisters, if you have ever put your trust in Jesus, you will know the Holy Spirit who worked your faith in you, and led you to trust in the finished salvation of our exalted Savior.

Since that, have we not often known the Spirit as *our helper in prayer?* I went to my chamber and I bowed upon my knees and tried to cry unto God, but though I sought to pray, I could not till all of a sudden I found a friend. It is written, "The Spirit also helps our infirmities...for He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." What delightful praying it is when the Holy Spirit indites the prayer so that we have nothing to do but just to read what He writes, to utter what He suggests, to speak out what He speaks, to be the ram's horn trumpet and He the breath that causes the sound! Oh, it is rapturous praying when the Spirit helps you pray! Ah, beloved, you know what this means, some of you. When you have had wrestling times like Jacob at Jabbok's brook; when you have been able to say like Luther, "I have overcome, I have had my desire of God," to what did you ascribe your prevalence, your moving that arm which moves the world, but to the Holy Spirit, who is the great help-

er of His people in times of prayer? Yes, we know the Spirit in that respect, for He is with us daily.

Then, when we rose from our knees, we opened the Scriptures, and began to read, and the Spirit of truth acted as *interpreter*. He wrote the book, and therefore He understands its meaning. What Bible readings those are when the Spirit of God is the expositor! It is poor reading when you merely sound the words, but find not the Spirit; the letter kills, the Spirit is Life. When "a glory gilds the sacred page, majestic like the sun," when every letter reflects the light of Deity, and every word glows in the presence of the living God, like the bush at Horeb's mountain, that glowed with living fire, ah, then, Bible readings become soul-fattening times, and the soul, being taught of God, sees the Father, has communion with the Son, and is filled with life, and light, and ineffable joy! You may say, perhaps, the Spirit of God is with us in these solitary and secret engagements, and so we know Him; but is He with us in public? Ah, beloved, you know not the Spirit unless you have often recognized Him in His operations as *the great calmer and quieter of His people's minds when under distractions.* It is perfectly marvelous how a soul that is like the Lake of Galilee, tossed with a thousand waves, becomes smooth as a sheet of glass when the Holy Spirit breathes upon it; cares, losses, woes, brokenness of heart, every shape of human misery yields to the soft whisper of the Spirit of God! Oh, if you do not know the Comforter, I pity you! You may have a thousand friends, but they are nothing compared to this one Comforter. All the remedies of other comforters can only be applied to the ear, but this celestial medicine affects the heart itself with matchless power of consolation. He does not merely give us something out of which we may draw comfort, but He actually comforts us, for He reaches the secret spring of our being, and sheds a sacred peace abroad. Yes, we know the Heavenly Dove; we have known Him when we have heard the slander of the many, and fear was on every side; we have known Him, for He has helped us to say—

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

We have known Him when we have lost much; when friend after friend has been hurried away to the grave; when there has been disappointment without, and dismay within, we have turned to Him, and have rested in the Infallible promise of an immutable God, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." I trust you know the Holy Spirit as the Comforter.

More especially is the Spirit known to believers as their *sanctifier*. In a certain sense we are sanctified by the blood of Jesus and by the election of the Father; we are set apart by election to be made holy through the blood by the power of the Holy Spirit. This third kind of sanctification, which consists in the subjugation of inbred sin, and in the victory of the

new life over the old nature—this is the daily work of the Spirit of God in the soul. It is the Spirit's work to check the unruly passion, to put the bit into the mouth of the fiery desire; it is the Spirit's work to feed the new-born soul, to give it energy and vigor, to give it victory over the old enemy; and, glory be to God, it will be the Spirit's work, one day, to make us exactly like our Master; we shall be fashioned into His image—we are to be melted and poured anew into the mold, and made like the first-born among many brethren; and while we shall give the Savior the praise for having washed us in His blood, yet we shall also bless the Holy Spirit who has worked all our works in us, and worked in us to will and to do according to the good pleasure of the Father—

"And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His, and His alone."

My dear brothers and sisters, I have not time to mention at length the multiform and hallowed works of the Spirit in us, but I trust you know them so well that you know Him by them. Suffice it to say that if you would receive blessing from the ministry, it must be through the power of the Spirit; and if, on the other hand, you would minister with power to others, you must wait upon that Spirit for your help. If we are ever to be lifted up from selfishness to disinterested sacrifice; if we are ever to be raised from cowardly doubts and fears to dauntless courage; if ever we are to arise from worldliness and carnality into heavenly mindedness, and true spirituality; if ever we are to shake off the serpent-slough of our old nature, and put on the pure vesture of Christ's likeness; if ever we are to be delivered from this present evil world, and to be filled with all the fullness of God, we must find our strength for each and all in the power and energy and quickening Spirit of the living God.

I leave this point, only endeavoring to urge each one to inquire, "What do I know of all this?" I am afraid many of you know nothing at all about it. You are a good sort of people; you were sprinkled when you were infants, and have been regularly to church or chapel all your lives; you do not owe anything, and live as you should live in many respects, and you think that outward morality and outward religion are everything. You use your hymnbooks and prayer books, and behave yourselves like respectable people; but if you have not the Spirit you are lost! The external without the inward is good for nothing. It is all good for nothing. A wagonload of profession is not worth an ounce of divine grace—"You must be born-again." The Holy Spirit must come into your souls, or else, if for a 1,000 years you could persevere in the most reputable external religion, you would end where you began, or in something worse, namely, in weariness of flesh about such empty things, or in a self-righteousness which would be more damnable perhaps than open sin. Beware of resting in anything short of the indwelling Spirit. You must have the Spirit; you cannot pass the gate of pearl without it; you cannot know Christ without

it. "Except a man be born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is no slight change which can be easily worked. You must be made new creatures—old things must pass away, and all things must become new. This is a work that your free agency cannot accomplish, a work that your poor weakness, which you call strength, will never be able to achieve; you must, therefore, have power from above. God must come into contact with you; the eternal Spirit must dwell in your soul, or else you can never dwell in heaven. Let this be laid home to your heart, and God bless the thought to your soul's profit.

II. Very briefly, in the second place, the chosen of God not only know the Spirit by His operations which they have seen in the church, and which they have felt in themselves, but, THEY KNOW HIM BY HIS PERSONAL INDWELLING IN THEIR SOULS.

I shall not attempt to preach upon this great mystery, but I should like you to catch the thought and to hold it in your hearts. You know that Jesus Christ gave us His righteousness and His blood, but He did a great deal more, He gave us *Himself*. "He loved us, and gave *Himself* for us." You have learned to distinguish between the gifts of Christ, and Christ Himself. Now, the Holy Spirit gives us His operations and His influences, for which we should be very grateful, but the greatest gift is not the operation nor the influence, but *Himself*, which "dwells with you and shall be in you." The great covenant gift is the Holy Spirit Himself. Do you understand that truth of God? It is asserted many times in Scripture that the bodies of the saints are the temples of the Holy Spirit. God dwells in you; you are the temples of God. Now, do not cut that down, and say that it means that He influences us and operates upon us. It does mean that, but it means a great deal more; it means literally this—that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the sacred Trinity, actually dwells in every regenerate man and woman, that He has made our bodies to be His shrine, and He is the indwelling Lord. Do you perceive this grand doctrine? I say again, not merely the graces of God, nor the operations of the Spirit, but the Spirit Himself dwells in us. He is everywhere, He fills all in all, but still He has a special residence; and though we are told in the chapter before us that the Father and the Son take up their abode with us, yet not in the same sense in which the Holy Spirit does. He *personally* dwells in the church, and in each believer. God the Holy Spirit is pleased to dwell in our bodies, not so as to deify our humanity, or to take us into connection with Deity in the same way as the humanity of Jesus was exalted, but still so as truly to dwell in us and abide in us. Brothers and sisters, gather up this manna, it is better than angels' food; and when you have received this truth of God thoroughly into your soul, you will say, "This is *wondrously condescending;* for, O Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof, and yet here it is, 'God dwells in me and I in Him.'" This indwelling must be *singularly effective.* It is very powerful for a great God to send His influences, but if He comes Himself! There is no way of doing work well, you know, except doing it yourself; and when

the Master comes, and gives personal attendance, it is sure to be done. Since the Holy Spirit dwells in us, how well His sanctifying work will be done! Depend upon it, He will not leave a single relic of sin when His work is achieved, because He has not sent an angel to us, but He has Himself come here to effect the divine purpose of making us qualified for the kingdom of God. Oh, how effective that presence must be! How *delightfully encouraging* is this indwelling, "If God actually dwells in me, then what may I not expect? There can be no blessing too great to expect if I have received the Holy Spirit Himself. If I am like one of old, a man full of the Holy Spirit, and then I cannot be empty of anything else, for when God gives Himself, how shall He not also give us all things?"

Brethren, if this is so, how *potently sanctifying* the thought is, for if God dwells in us, let us not defile these bodies. What a powerful operation that truth ought to have, and will have, upon everyone who believes it, for "every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as *He* is pure." We must make the temple pure while God is with us; we cannot prostitute the soul to sin while the Holy Spirit resides with us, and embraces us in the mighty cloud of His divine influences. What can be nobler than a Christian? Talk of kings and queens, what are they compared with men who, every day, carry God about with them? When Ignatius stood before the judges, they said, "You are called the God-bearer, Theophorus; what do you mean by this?" He said, "I am a God-bearer; God dwells in me." When the persecutor looked at him and said he blasphemed, he replied that the Holy Spirit dwelt in him. Ah, and Ignatius proved it; for when they put him to a cruel death, he bore it with undaunted courage; God shone through the man, and made human weakness a platform for divine strength! If you and I dare to say God dwells in us, we must prove it too; perhaps not by a cruel death, but by what is far more difficult—a *holy life*. The Lord help us so to live, that men may take knowledge of us that God looks through our eyes; that the love of God acts through our hands in deeds of integrity and kindness; that God speaks through our tongues in words of truth and holiness; and that God has been pleased to fill us to the full with His own love, breathing Himself into us, that we might breathe Him out among the sons of men in actions that shall be like Christ, and reflect honor upon His name. Thus I have brought before you a rich thought for meditation.

III. Now, in the third place, beloved, if we thus know the Holy Spirit, WE SHALL KNOW HIM BETTER SOON.

We shall be more instructed; and the instructed disciple knows the Master better than he who is in the A, B, C, class. We shall be more fully sanctified, and the pure in heart see God; and the more pure we become, the more clearly shall we see the great Purifier; the Holy Spirit will daily reveal Christ to us, and as we grow more like Christ, we shall see more of Christ, and more of Him whose office it is to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us. None of us know to what we may yet attain. I had no idea, when I first knew the Lord, of even the small attainment to

which I have come in divine truth. I have put away many a childish thing, and learned many a manly truth of God which was too high for me before; but if the Lord shall spare our lives—why, beloved, we have specimens among us of saints who have known the Lord 40 or 50 years, who far outstrip us in a thousand things—I do not know what we may be even here: I do not think any man knows to what a Christian may attain. We become warped and crippled by our small conceptions of the possible in divine grace. Many Christians get Chinese shoes put on their feet, and never get developed, and therefore they think there must always be doubts and fears. There is no need for it! A man might as well live without doubts and fears as not; if he would grow in divine grace, he would outgrow unbelief. We fancy if we get to be as full of faith as Abraham, that it will be a great attainment. Oh, but Abraham only lived in the twilight, when Christ had not come! We live in a better age than Abraham, after the coming of Christ; and we ought never to stint ourselves to the same degree as those ancient saints; we are to excel them, and mount higher and higher. You know not how sweet and clear the air is, how glorious the views above these clouds, if you could but stretch your wings of love and confidence and zeal, and mount above the world. We do not know what we shall be; we cannot tell what we shall know of the love, and of the Spirit of God here. There *is* one thing we know—that when He shall appear, whose coming is our daily hope, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is; and when we shall be like He, then we shall know the Spirit of God, for we shall be filled with wisdom and knowledge, and made in the Image of Christ, who is our all in all.

If any of you desire the Spirit of God, remember that your business is not with *Him* first, but with the cross of Christ. Trust Christ, poor, broken-hearted sinner! I pray that the Holy Spirit may give you precious faith to do it. Your brokenness of heart comes from Him. The Christian who is saved has to do with the Spirit of God, but to you, poor sinner, the gospel command is, look to Jesus, look to Jesus and live! May the Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

ALIVE OR DEAD —WHICH?
NO. 755

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 16, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life."
1 John 5:12.

LAST Sunday morning we addressed you upon the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit in the believer, and upon the glorious fact of His dwelling in the hearts of the regenerate. [See Sermon #754, Volume 13—THE SAINT AND THE SPIRIT—read/download, by God's grace, all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons, and over 754 Spanish translations free of charge at www.spurgeongems.org.] Now it frequently happens that when we discourse upon the work of the Holy Spirit, there are certain weak and uninstructed brothers and sisters who straightway fall into questions and despondencies, because they in some point or other are unable to discern the work of grace within themselves. That work may be prospering within them, but through the turmoil of their spirits and the dimness of their mental vision, they do not at once perceive it, and therefore they are distracted and alarmed. There is a consoling doctrine which is intended to yield comfort to souls thus afflicted; it is the great truth of God that, "Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life." If they would remember this gospel declaration, they might also with advantage consider the other spiritual fact, and by weighing the two truths of God in their minds, they might receive much permanent blessing; while at the present, by having an eye to one only, they throw themselves off balance, and make to themselves many sorrows. It is not, however, the easiest thing in the world to preach clearly, with judicious blending, the operations of the Spirit, and the doctrine of complete salvation by faith in Jesus Christ; however clear our utterance, we shall seem sometimes to make one truth entrench upon the other. It is the mark of the Christian minister, who is taught of God, that he rightly divides the Word of truth; but this rightly dividing is so far from being an easy thing, that it must be taught us by no less a teacher than God the Holy Spirit. When our Lord addressed Nicodemus, He experienced the same difficulty which at this day every watchful minister observes in his hearers; He found that a description of the inner work must be accompanied by the publication of the gospel of faith, or it would only cause bewilderment and depression. Our Lord began, in the third chapter of John's gospel, by telling Nicodemus that he must be born-again, and explaining to him the mysterious character of the new birth. Whereupon Nicodemus was filled with wonder, and unbelievingly exclaimed, "How can these things be?" He does not seem to have made the smallest advance towards faith by hearing of the new birth, and therefore on the same occasion our Lord turned aside from the doctrine of regeneration, or the inner work, to speak to him of the doctrine of Faith, or the work of Christ, which is the object of saving faith. Thus it comes to pass that the very same chapter

which has in it that searching passage, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," contains also these encouraging words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." From which I gather, my brothers and sisters, that those unwise revivalists who perpetually cry up, "Believe and live!" and by their silence, and sometimes by their unguarded remarks, disparage repentance and other works of the Holy Spirit, have not our Savior's example for so doing; and on the other hand, those conservative preachers who continually cry up inward experience, and preach the work of the Spirit, but forget to publish the gospel message, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," these also have neither example nor precedent from our Lord Jesus Christ or His apostles, but mar the truth of God by leaving out a portion of it.

If we can with all boldness and distinctness, declare the inward work which the Holy Spirit accomplishes in the soul by working in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure, and at the same time can tell the sinner most plainly that the objective of his faith is not the work within, but the work which Jesus Christ accomplished upon the cross for him, we shall have dealt faithfully with divine truth, and wisely with our hearer's soul. The faith which brings salvation looks away from everything that is inward to that which was accomplished and completed by our once slain but now ascended Lord; and yet no man has this faith except as it is worked in him by the quickening Spirit. If we can preach both these truths of God in harmonious proportion, it seems to me that we shall have hit upon that form of Christian teaching which, while it is consistent with truth, is also healthful to the soul. Having on the previous Sunday done our best with the one subject, we now seek to give the other its fair prominence.

We have in the text mention made of certain men who are *living,* and of others who are *dead;* and, as the two are put together in the text, we shall close by some observations upon the *conduct of those who have life towards those who are destitute of it.*

I. First, then, CONCERNING THE LIVING.

Our text testifies that, "He that has the Son has life." Of course, by "life" here is meant not mere existence, or natural life; for we all have that whether we have the Son of God or not—in the image of the first Adam we are all created living souls, and continue in life until the Lord recalls the breath from our nostrils—but the life here intended is spiritual life, the life received at the new birth, by which we perceive and enter into the heavenly kingdom, come under new and spiritual laws, are moved by new motives, and exist in a new world. The life here meant is the life of God in the soul, which is given us when we are newly created in the image of the second Adam, who was made a quickening Spirit; a celestial form of life inwardly perceptible to the person who possesses it, and outwardly discernible to spiritual observers by its holy effects and heavenly fruits. This spiritual life is the sure mark of deliverance from the penal death which the sentence of the law pronounced. Man under the law is condemned, sentence of death is recorded against him; but man under divine grace is free from the law, and is not adjudged to death, but lives by virtue of a legal justification which absolves him from guilt, and con-

sequently liberates him from death. These two kinds of life, the life which is given by the judge to the offender when he is pardoned, and the life which is imparted from the divine Father, the heir of heaven is begotten again unto a lively hope—these two lives blend together and ensure for us the eternal life such as they possess who stand upon the "sea of glass," and tune their tongues to the music of celestial hosts. Eternal life is spiritual life made perfect. If we live by virtue of our pardon and justification, and if, moreover, we live because we are quickened by the Holy Spirit, we shall also live in the glory of the eternal Father, being made in the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the true God and eternal life. This is the life here intended— spiritual life, eternal life.

By the term "having the Son," we understand possessing the Lord Jesus Christ. There is the finished work of Jesus, and faith appropriates it. We trust in Christ, and Christ becomes ours. As the result of grace in our souls, we chose the Lord Jesus as the ground of our dependence, and then we accept Him as the Lord of our hearts, the guide of our actions, and supreme delight of our souls. He who has the Son, then, is a man who is trusting alone in Jesus, in whom Jesus Christ rules and reigns; and such a man is most assuredly the possessor of spiritual and eternal life at the present moment. It is not said, "he shall have life"—he *has* it, he enjoys it now, he is at this hour a quickened spirit; God has breathed into him a new life, by which he is made a partaker of the divine nature, and is one of the seed according to promise, and this life he has by virtue of his having received the Son of God to be his all.

I have thus briefly opened up the words of the text, and having broken the bone; let us now discuss the marrow and fatness of it. Whoever in this world possesses Christ by faith is most certainly alive unto God by a life eternal. I shall remark, in the first place, that *having the Son is good evidence of eternal life*, from the fact that faith by which a man receives Christ is in itself a living *act*. Faith is the hand of the soul, but a dead man cannot stretch out his icy limbs to take of that which is presented to him. If I, as a guilty, needy sinner, with my empty hands receive the fullness of Christ, I have performed a living act; the hand may quiver with weakness, but life is there. Faith is the eye of the soul, by which the sin-bitten sinner looks to Christ, lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; but from the stony eyes of death no glance of faith can dart. There may be all the organization by which it should look, but if life is absent the eyes cannot see. If, therefore, my eye of faith has looked alone to Jesus, and I depend upon Him, I must be a living soul—that act has proven me to be alive unto God. Looking to Jesus is a very simple act, indeed, it is a childlike act, but still it is a living one: no sight gleams from the eyeballs of death. Faith, again, is the mouth of the soul; by faith we feed upon Christ. Jesus Christ is digested and inwardly assimilated, so that our soul lives upon Him; but a dead man cannot eat. Whoever heard of carcasses gathering at a banquet? There may be the mouth, the teeth, and the palate, and so forth—the organization may be perfect—but the dead man neither tastes the sweet nor relishes the delicious; if, then, I have received Christ Jesus as the bread which came down from heaven, as the spiritual drink from the rock, I have performed an action which is in itself a clear evidence that I belong to the living in Zion.

Now, my dear friends, perhaps some of you have hardly any other evidence of grace but this, you know that you have received Christ; you know that you look to Jesus and lay hold upon Him. Well, then, you could not have done this if you had not obtained eternal life, and the text is evidently true, "He who has the Son has life."

Furthermore, faith in Jesus is good evidence of life, because of the things which accompany it. Now, no man ever did come to Jesus Christ and receive Him until he had felt his need of a Savior: no sickness, no physician; no wound, no surgeon. No soul asks for pardon or obtains it till he has felt that sin is an evil for which pardon is necessary; that is to say, *repentance always comes with faith.* There must be a loathing of sin and a dread of its consequences, or there is no faith. Now, as repentance is an evident sign of life, faith in Jesus must involve spiritual life. What if I say that repentance is like the cry of the new-born baby, which indicates that the child is alive? That cry of, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" is as sure a sign of life as the song of cherubim before the throne of God. There could have been no laying hold of Christ without true repentance of sin, which repentance becomes, in its turn, a clear proof of the possession of the inner life which springs from incorruptible seed, and therefore lives and abides forever.

Where there is faith, again, there is always prayer. Depend upon it, that if Saul of Tarsus cries, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" it will, before long, be said of him, "Behold, he prays." No soul believes in Jesus Christ without exercising its faith and its desires in prayer; but prayer is the breath of the soul, and where there is breath there must be life. Can the dead pray to God? Shall a dead soul cry out for mercy? No, beloved, the falling of a tear, the upward glance of an eye when none but God is near—these may be very weak prayers as men judge them, but they are as much signs of life as Jacob's wrestling at the brook Jabbok, or Elijah's prevailing with God on Carmel's brow. So, then, he who has an interest in the Lord Jesus, since his faith is attended by repentance and prayer, and many other holy graces, has a multitude of sure and certain evidences of eternal life within the soul.

And I might say that the consequences of receiving Christ are also good evidences of heavenly life; for when a man receives the Son of God, he obtains a measure of peace and joy; and peace with God and joy in the Holy Spirit are not to be found in the sepulchers of dead souls. When Ezekiel saw the dry bones in the valley, I do not find that any of them were singing for joy of heart, or silently musing in unutterable thankfulness. There was a sort of peace in the valley, the horrible repose of death, the grim silence of the grave; but living, sparkling peace, flowing like a river, those dry bones could not know. Job says of the hypocrite, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty?" Joy in God is too wonderful a work of God for mere professors to forge a passable counterfeit of it. Artificial flowers may be very like the real beauties of the garden, but they lack the joyous perfume and honeyed stores of life and the bees soon find out the difference; the honey juice and the delicate aroma are not to be matched. The like might be said of all the results of faith which are far too numerous for me to speak of in detail this morning, such as purging the conscience from dead works, enlightenment by the Spirit, godly fear, the spirit of adoption, brotherly love, separation from the world, the conse-

cration of life, holy gratitude which mounts like a flame to heaven, and sacred affection which ascends like altar smoke—none of these can be found in the morgue of fallen humanity; they can only be discovered in the house of life where God works according to His good pleasure. He who has the Son, it is clear, has life, because the act by which he lays hold upon the Son of God, the occurring of that act, and the consequences of that act, all infallibly betoken the possession of eternal life.

The possession of the Lord Jesus Christ is the evidence of faith in many ways. It is God's mark upon a living soul. See yonder battlefield strewn with men who have fallen in the terrible conflict! Many have been slain, many more are wounded, and there they lie in ghastly confusion, the dead all stark and stiff, covered with their own crimson, and the wounded faint and bleeding, unable to leave the spot where they have fallen. Surgeons have gone over the field rapidly, ascertaining which are corpses beyond the reach of mercy's healing hand, and which men are faint with loss of blood. Each living man has a paper fastened conspicuously on his breast, and when the soldiers are sent out with the ambulances to gather up the wounded, they do not, themselves, need to stay and judge which may be living and which may be dead; they see a mark upon the living, and lifting them up right tenderly, they bear them to the hospital where their wounds may be dressed. Now, faith in the Son is God's infallible mark which He has set upon every poor wounded sinner whose bleeding heart has received the Lord Jesus; though he faints and feels as lifeless as though he were mortally wounded, yet he most surely lives if he believes, for the possession of Jesus is the token which cannot deceive. Faith is God's mark witnessing in unmistakable language—"this soul lives." Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He who believes on Me has everlasting life." Tenderly, tenderly, you ministers of Christ, and you blood-bought ones who care for the broken-hearted, lift up this wounded one, bear him away, bind up his wounds with comfortable promises, and restore his ebbing life with precious consolations from the Book of God. Whatever else we cannot see, if a simple trust in Jesus is discernible in a convert, we need feel no suspicions, but receive him at once as a beloved brother; for this is the Father's will, that everyone that sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life!

Moreover, the possession of the Lord Jesus Christ becomes a clear evidence of life, because, indeed, it is in some sense the source, fountain, and nourishment of life. Here is a hand, "Is it alive?" Many questions may be asked about it which will be unsatisfactory as evidence of life. "Has it a delicate complexion? Are the fingers well fashioned?" The answers may be, as you please, yes or no, and yet life may be present or absent. "Is it adorned with gold rings set with emeralds or diamonds?" Or, "Does it wear an elegant, well-fitting glove?" The answer may be whichever you please; none of those things will at all effect the life of the hand. It may be white as ivory, or brown as autumn leaves; it may be clad in mailed gauntlet, or soiled with stains of blood, and yet it may be either clay cold in death or warm with life. But here is the question which cuts at the main point: "Is the hand vitally connected with a living head?" If it is so, then the conclusion is inevitable, that the hand is most surely alive. Now faith, by which we receive the Son of God, is the grace which vitally unites the members with Christ, their living Head; and

where there is a vital union with the Son of God, there must be life. While the branch is vitally in the stem, it will have life; if it is not always bearing fruit, yet it always has life in itself, because it is in union with the living stem; and thus, beloved, the fact of having the Son becomes an evidence of life, because He is the source of life.

In another aspect of it, having the Son is not only the source of life, but the result of life. When the great doors were opened at the Black Hole in Calcutta, and the pure air went streaming in, there were many lungs which did not receive that air for the simple reason that the most of those who had been so barbarously confined were dead, and to them the fresh oxygen had come too late; but there were a few which gladly and at once received the breath of heaven, and such as were still alive walked forth from amidst the corpses into the open air. Now, when a man receives Jesus into his soul as life from the dead, his faith is the sure indicator of a spiritual and mysterious life within him, in the power of which he is able to receive the Lord. Jesus is freely preached to you, His grace is free as the air, but the dead do not breathe that air—those who breathe it are, beyond all doubt, alive. Christ is presented to you in the preaching of the gospel as freely as the water from the drinking fountain at the corner of the street; but the dead man drinks not, his lips care not for the flowing crystal. He who drinks is evidently alive. The reception of Jesus Christ is the sure result of a heavenly life palpitating within the soul. Thus you see the evidence is good, from several points of the compass; looking at the soul's business from several ways, faith still becomes with equal clearness a witness that the man who has it possesses the divine life within him.

Let me further remark, that *the possession of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith is sufficient evidence of eternal life.* "I do not know," says one, "when I was converted." My dear friend, have you the Son of God? Do you trust in Jesus Christ? That is quite enough. If you can from the heart say, "I trust Jesus Christ," though you have no spiritual biography worth recording, you have life. Many aged persons have either forgotten their birthdays, or have lost the register, and cannot tell exactly how old they are; but that does not at all prove that they are not alive; so your not knowing precisely when you were converted is no evidence that you are not saved. No doubt, it is very comfortable to be able to refer to a distinct date and place when the great change took place, but in many instances there could be no such reference made because the change was extremely gradual. In some parts of the world the sun rises quickly and sets just as quickly; but here, in England, we enjoy those delightful twilights which herald the morning and foreshadow the night. With many converts, there is a long twilight of soul in which they are not all darkness, but certainly not all light; they can scarcely tell where the darkness ended and where the light began. Dear friends, do not worry yourselves about the almanac of grace; care more about its present reality and less about its past history. "He that has the Son of God has life." Though he may not know when he laid hold upon the Son of God, yet if he has Him now, he has no need to harbor the raven of mistrust.

Faith is sufficient evidence, even in the absence of any great knowledge. I would to God that we were all taught in the word, and could enter into the doctrines which are food for strong men in Christ, but even

then we should know very little of election; though the difference between sanctification and justification might seem too high for us to comprehend, yet if we have the Son of God we have life. No doubt there have been some who have entered heaven who were little better than half-witted, and yet, through simple faith in Jesus, they were as surely saved as a Newton or a Locke, who, with all their understanding and all their philosophy, could not rest upon a better foundation than the merit of that condescending Redeemer upon whom the poorest fool in the kingdom may depend with safety. If you have Christ, learn as much as you can; seek to grow in divine grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; but if your understanding is dull, do not tremble as though your soul depended upon your knowledge, for "He that has the Son has life," however ignorant he may be.

So, again, it may be that you have never passed through any special horrors and alarms. When some pilgrims come to the Wicket Gate, the Slough of Despond pours forth its filth, and the black dog howls at them as they knock at Mercy's door, but many others are brought to Jesus gently, being carried like lambs in His bosom. Many of Christ's flowers bloom in sheltered spots, and feel not the frosts of sharp temptation. Jesus has bands of love to draw with, as well as a scourge of small cords to draw with. Many gentle spirits are led to find their all in the Christ of God, and yet they know very little of the depths of their inward depravity, and less still of the evil suggestions of Satan. My dear friends, do not let this distress you, I was about to say, even be thankful for it. Have you looked to Jesus Christ? Have you depended alone on Him? That is, for the present, sufficient evidence without anything else. "He that has the Son of God has life."

I think I hear someone say, "Ah, but I have been reading the biography of such-and-such a good man, and I find him frequently in the Seventh heaven of communion, so full of joy and rapture. Oh, that I knew something about that!" Well, I wish you did. I would have you covet earnestly the best gifts. But, my dear friend, you must not think that because you have not enjoyed these raptures, therefore you are not saved. Many go to heaven with very little comfort on the road. I do not commend them for their lack of comfort; but I do advise you, instead of looking to singular experiences as a ground of confidence, look to the bleeding Savior, and rest alone on Him, for if you have Him you have eternal life. To compare ourselves among ourselves is not wise. Experiences greatly differ. All Israelites are of the loins of Jacob, but all are not of the tribe of Judah. I do not doubt that the facial features of all the Jewish tribes differed; yet still the great type of father Jacob could be seen in the face of every Jew. So the spiritual features of all the children of God will differ, for there are diversities of operations; but notwithstanding that, there is a unity of spirit which cannot be broken. Beloved, have you the Son of God? If so, you have life; and even if that life should be somewhat sickly, which is not desirable, yet it will help to make it stronger if you distinctly know that it is the life eternal. When a man's life becomes feeble, it would be of no service to him to doubt whether it is life at all; but it helps him much to know that it is the life of God, and is therefore sure to be victorious over death and hell, and though it is but a spark, it is such a spark that all the devils in hell cannot stamp it out, and all the waters of affliction can-

not quench it. If you have the Son, poor feeble trembling one, you have a life which will co-exist with the life of God; a life which "neither things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," shall be able to destroy; because they cannot separate you from the Lord Jesus; and because He lives, you shall live also.

It is a great mercy that *having the Son is abiding evidence.* "He that has the Son *has* life." I know what it is to see every other evidence I ever gloried in go drifting down the stream far out of sight. It is frequently my inward experience to see sin and unworthiness marked upon everything I have ever done for God. As far as He has done any good thing by me or in me, it lives; but oftentimes as I look back upon my years of ministry, and see multitudes of sermons, and prayers, and other efforts, I have thought of them all as being less than nothing and vanity, tainted, and marred, and spoiled by my personal imperfections. I could not depend on the whole of them to make as much as a feather weight towards my salvation. When you begin to doubt your inward graces, and to judge all your past life, and find it lacking, it is sweet even then, to say—

"One thing I know, I rest in Jesus.
Whatever else may be false, this is clearly true—
'Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on You.' "

Job says that the poor man clings to the rock for shelter, and that poor man is blessed who remains in that position, evermore clinging to that rock of his salvation—

"Forever here my rest shall be,
Close to Your wounded side;
This all my trust and all my plea,
For me the Savior died."

I suppose, dear friends, that your experience, like mine, leads you to lean less on self and more upon the Lord. You sometimes come out in full feather, all glorious to behold, and you shine like a full developed and advanced saint; but how soon your mountain moves, for the Lord hides His face! A molting season sets in, and soon all your plumes and honors are trailed in the mire, and you have even to hide yourself from your own sight, for you feel utterly ashamed. It is very probable that at such a time you have a much truer opinion of yourself than in your prosperity—you are much nearer the mark when you despise yourself than when you find somewhat wherein to glory. It is unspeakably precious in hours of discouragement, then, to fly straight away to Jesus, with the contrite cry of—

"Just as I am—without one plea
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that You bidd'st me come to Thee.
O Lamb of God, I come."

I have heard of persons boasting that they had outgrown that hymn, but I know I never shall. I must be content still to come to Jesus with no qualification for mercy except that which my sin and misery may give me in the eyes of His free grace. It is a thousand mercies that, although clouds may obscure other evidences, they cannot prevent our coming to the great propitiation, and casting ourselves upon His cleansing power.

Dear friends, I may close this first head by saying that *having the Son is infallible evidence of life.* "He that has the Son *has* life." It is not said that he may, perhaps, have it, or that some who have the Son have life,

but there is no exception to the rule. As sure as God's word is true, "He that has the Son has life," be he who he may, or what he may. This gracious assurance includes those of you who labor in the depths of poverty, you who are in the furnace of affliction, you returning backsliders who still hang on Christ, you believers under a cloud, you who mourn your many shortcomings—by faith you dare to rest in Jesus, and you have therefore passed from death unto life. Be of good cheer, beloved. Drink of the well of hope, and in joyful confidence in the Lord press forward in your heavenward pilgrimage.

II. Now a word CONCERNING THE DEAD.

"He that has not the Son of God has not life"—that is, he has not spiritual life; the sentence of death is recorded against him in the book of God. His natural life is spared him in this world, but he is condemned already, and is in the eye of the law dead while he lives. Think of that, some of you, for these words refer to you. The unbeliever has no spiritual life; he neither laments his soul's need, nor rejoices that it may be supplied; he lives without prayer, and he knows nothing of secret fellowship with God, because he has no inward life to produce these priceless things. Consequently, he will have no eternal life; he will exist forever, but his existence will be a protracted death—of life he will not taste; he will have none of the joys of paradise, no sight of God's face; he will not swell the song of eternal happiness, nor drink of the river of ever-flowing bliss. He is a walking corpse, a moving carcass, a body in which death holds the place of life. He has not the Son of God—that is, he has never trusted in Jesus to save him, and never submitted himself to the guidance and governing of the King in Zion.

Now observe that the not having the Son of God is clear evidence of the absence of spiritual life; for the man who has not trusted in Jesus has made God a liar. Shall pure spiritual life make God a liar? Shall he receive life from God who persists in denying God's testimony? How shall God blot out his sentence of condemnation while the criminal remains such an enemy to his own Creator as to count Him a liar? The history of his unbelief proves that he is not a spiritually living man, for up till now he has chosen darkness, which is the dwelling place of death, and has loved corruption, which is the fruit of the grave. Would the spiritually quickened have done this? He has quenched his conscience; he has done despite to the Spirit of grace; he has preferred sin to righteousness, and the pleasures of this world to the joys of heaven; he has seen no beauty in Christ, no suitability in His salvation—the man must be blind, he must be devoid of all spiritual sense—in fact, he must be dead, or he would not have acted so.

Let me tell you that for a hearer of the gospel not to believe on the Son of God must be, in the judgment of angels, a very astounding crime. How they must marvel when they see that God was made flesh to redeem the sons of men, and yet men do not believe in the incarnate Savior! The "faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," is not depended upon by tens of thousands; though it is "worthy of all acceptance," yet the mass of mankind give it no acceptance. What must angels think of such men? They no doubt understand the reason of it, that the mind is so perverted and corrupt that manhood is nothing better than a reeking sepulcher. Unbelief of the gospel is the great damning sin

of man; the not laying hold of Jesus is the sin of sins—it is like Jeroboam, of whom we read that he sinned and made Israel to sin. It is the egg in which all manner of mischief lies. Not believing in Jesus Christ is *the* condemnation emphatically. "This is *the* condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light."

Remember, my dear hearers, if you have never received Christ, this is overwhelming evidence that you are dead in sin. You have been sprinkled in your infancy; you have been confirmed, perhaps you have been immersed, possibly you have joined the Church; but if you have not the Son of God, all those outward things have not the weight of a grain of sand in the scale. "Oh, but," you may say, "I have been assured on good authority that 'I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,' in my baptism!" You were so assured upon the authority of a book which has deceived many, and will, I fear, deceive tens of thousands more. It is not true that you are an inheritor of heaven if you have not Christ. If you have believed in Christ, you have life, but if you have not the Son of God you have no heavenly life; and let all the priests that ever lived assure you of your being a child of God by your baptism, I tell them flat to their faces that they lie in their throats, and that some of them know they do. The Word of God is to be taken and not theirs, and that word says, "He that has not the Son has not life." Away with these false priests and their infant sprinkling too—what have they to do to pretend to be the servants of God when they are deceivers of souls? No outward ceremonies, though they are multiplied ten thousandfold, and rendered gorgeous by all the pomp and glory of the world; no, even though God Himself should command them, could give you spiritual life! You must have Christ, for He is the life of the soul, and without Him you are dead in sin! "Oh, but," perhaps you may say, "I have always lived a chaste, upright, moral life! I have been attentive to religious duties; I could allege many particulars which might go to prove that I live unto God." Yes, but all your particulars, however well they might be alleged, would prove nothing in the teeth of such a text as this, "He that has not the Son of God has not life." I tell you, moralist, what you are—you are a corpse well-washed and decently laid out, daintily robed in fair white linen, sprinkled plenteously with sweet perfumes, and wrapped in myrrh, and cassia, and aloes, with flowers wreathed about your brow, and your bosom decked by the hand of affection with sweetly blushing roses; but you have no life, and therefore your destiny is the grave, corruption is your heritage, and your place of abode is fixed, "where their worm dies not, and the fire not quenched," for, "He that believes not shall be damned." With all his excellences and moralities, with all his baptisms and his sacraments, "He that believes not shall be damned." There is no middle place, no specially reserved and superior abodes for these noble and virtuous unbelievers. If they have not believed, they shall be bound up in bundles with the rest, for God has appointed to unbelievers their portion with liars, and thieves, and whoremongers, and drunkards, and idolaters. Beware you unbelievers, for your unbelief will be to the judge Himself at the great assize, and to the attendant angels most condemning evidence against you. "Take him away; Christ has not known him, and he has not known Christ; He had not the Son, and he shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Now, if such things were spoken concerning some people in Africa or New Zealand, you ought to be concerned about these miserable souls, though they are so far away; but they are spoken about some of you—some of you are dead. Is not this terrible? Oh, if by some touch of an angel's wand our bodies should all become as our souls are, how many corpses would fill these aisles and crowd these pews! John once wished for Gaius, that his body might prosper and be in health even as his soul prospered. Now, suppose our bodies were to prosper just as our souls do! Why, there would sit in one place a living woman, and side by side with her a dead husband; further on, a living child, and then a dead gray-headed grandfather. Oh, what a sight this place would be! We should hasten to gather up our garments, those of us who are alive, and say, "Let us be gone! How can we sit side by side with corpses?" The effect would be startling to the last degree, and yet, most probably, the *spiritual* fact does not disturb us at all; we know it to be true, but we take it as a matter of course, and we go our way with scarcely a prayer for our poor dead neighbors.

III. I close the sermon by a few observations CONCERNING THE LIVING AS THEY DWELL AMONG THE DEAD. As the living are compelled to live among the dead, as the children of God are mixed up by providence with the heirs of wrath, what manner of persons ought they to be?

In the first place let us take care that we do not become contaminated by the corruption of the dead. You who have the Son of God, mind that you are not injured by those who have not the Son. We have heard of such accidents when the anatomist has been making an examination of a dead body: he has been prying with his scalpel among the bones, and nerves, and sinews, and perhaps he has pricked his finger, and the dead matter has infected his blood, and death has been swift and sure. Now, I have heard of some professed Christians, wanting to see, they said, the ways of the ungodly, going into low places of amusement, to spy out the land, to judge for themselves. Such conduct is dangerous and worse. My dear friends, I never found it necessary, in my ministry, to do anything of the kind, and yet I think I have had no small success in winning souls. I must confess, I should feel very much afraid to go into hell, to put my head between the lion's jaws, for the sake of looking down his throat. I should think I was guilty of a gross presumption if I went into the company of the lewd and the profane to see what they were doing. I should fear that perhaps it might turn out that I was only a mere professor, and so should taint myself with the dead matter of the sin of those with whom I mingled, and perish in my iniquity. "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." The resort of the ungodly is not the place for you. "Let the dead bury their dead, but as for you," said Christ, "follow Me."

If we must in this life, in a measure, mingle with the dead, let us take care that we never allow the supremacy of the dead to be acknowledged over the living. It would be a strange thing if the dead were to rule the living: the dead must be laid in their coffins, and put away in their narrow cells according as the living may decree. Yet sometimes I have seen the dead have the dominion of this world; that is to say, they have set the fashion, and living Christians have followed. The carnal world has said, "This is the way of trade!" And the Christian man has replied, "I will fol-

low the custom." Christian, this must not be. "Yes, but," says one, "I must do as others do, for you know we must live." This also is not true, for there is no necessity for our living; there is a very great necessity for our dying sooner than living, if we cannot live without doing wrong. O Christian, you must never agree that corruption should conquer grace! By God's grace, if you get at all under the power of custom, you must cry out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" You must wrestle till you conquer, and cry, "Thanks be unto God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

What I think we should do towards dead souls is this—we should pity them. When the early Christians dwelt in the catacombs, where they could not go about without seeing graves, they must have had strange thoughts arising in their minds. Now, my brothers and sisters, you are in a similar plight, you cannot walk through London without thinking, "The most of these I meet with are dead in sin." Some of these dead souls live in your own house; they are your own children, your own servants. When you go out to work, you have to stand at the same bench with spiritually dead men. You cannot turn aside from your daily labor to enter the House of God but what you even meet the dead there! Ought not this to make us pray for them: "eternal Spirit, quicken them! They cannot have life unless they have the Son of God. O bring them to receive the Son of God"? Beloved, in connection with such prayer, be diligent to deliver the quickening message. The quickening message is, "Believe, and live." "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God."

Ought you not, you living ones, to be perpetually repeating the great life-word, depending upon the Holy Spirit to put energy into it? Do, I pray you, seek to win souls, and from this day, separating yourselves from the world as to its maxims and its customs, plunge into the very thick of it wherein you can serve your Master, plucking brands from the fire, and winning souls from going down to the pit of hell.

May the Lord bless this simple word this morning, for His name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 JOHN 5.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

WORK
NO. 756

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 21, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE SURREY CHAPEL, BLACKFRIARS ROAD.

"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work."
John 9:4.

You observe that a very speculative question had been put to our Lord, and His answer to that very speculative question is, *"I must work."* His disciples wished to know something about the mysterious fact that some persons are born in an unhappy condition—blind, or deaf, or dumb—on what account they were sent into the world under such disadvantageous circumstances. Would you not yourselves like to know? Do you not wish that the Savior had expounded all that mystery? There are so many points of controversy connected with that question, that He could scarcely have had a more suggestive topic. Surely He might have enlightened us far more than Socrates or Plato. Why did He not, at once, with such a noble opportunity, plunge into the labyrinth of metaphysics, or begin to expound predestination, and open up the points in it which agree or disagree with free agency? Here was a noble opportunity for interpreting all the marvels of divine sovereignty and natural suffering. Why did He not at once open all this up to the people? No, but with a very short answer He turns to them and says, *"I* must work; *you* may think; *you* may talk; *you* may argue, but *I* must work. *You* may give yourselves up, if you know no better, to the inferior occupation of jangling about words, but *I* must work. Nobler calls I have to obey than those which come to your carnal ears."

We gather, then, that the Savior has a greater respect for work than He has for speculation; that when He comes into the world, He will go to all the mighty thinkers, and the gentlemen who are constantly producing new ideas, and wonderful points of subtlety, and put them into the scale as so much rubbish; but that when He finds a single worker, a poor widow who has given her two mites, a poor saint who has spoken for Christ, and been the means of the conversion of a soul, He will take up these works which were done for Him as precious grains of costly gold. We may say of the field of enterprise and work for Christ, as of the land of Havilah, "The gold of that land is good," and Christ thinks it to be so. He estimates the work of faith and labor of love done for Him as of great price.

I. I shall ask your attention to the text, taking and keeping close to the very words of it; and the thing we observe first, is, A NECESSITY TO LABOR—"I *must* work."

With Christ it was not, "I may if I will," not, "I can if I like," not the mere possibility and the mere potentiality of work, but an imperious

necessity—"I *must."* He could not help Himself. If I may use such words concerning one who is no less divine than He was human, He was under restraint; He was bound; He was compelled. The cords which bound Him, however, were the cords of His Deity. *They* were the cords of love which bound Him who is love. "I must work." *It was because He loved the sons of men so much* that He could not sit still and watch them perish. He could not come down from heaven and stand here robed in our mortal flesh, and be an impassive, careless, loitering spectator of so much evil, so much misery. His heart beat high with desire. He thirsted to be doing good and His greatest and grandest act, His sacrifice of Himself, was a baptism with which He had to be baptized, and He was straitened until it was accomplished. His great soul within Him felt as if it could not be easy. It was like the troubled sea that cannot rest. Each of His thoughts was like a mighty wave that could not be still. His whole soul was like a volcano when it begins to swell with lava, and needs to vent. He must let His soul run out in hot consecration and devotion to the cause of those whom He came to save. "I *must,"* He says; "I *must* work."

Not only was it the love within which made the compulsion, but it was also the sorrow without which compelled Him. That blind man had touched the secret chord that set the Savior's soul at work. If that blind man had not been there; or, rather, if it had been possible for the Savior to forget the cases of misery which existed around Him, then He might, perhaps, have been quiet; but because always before His soul He saw the multitudes perishing as sheep without a shepherd; because, far more vividly than you and I have ever done, He had realized the value of a soul and the horror of a soul being lost, He felt as though He could not be still. "I *must* work," He said. Fancy yourselves, my brothers and sisters, standing on the beach when a ship is being broken on the rocks. If there were anything that you could do towards the rescue of the mariners, would you not feel within yourselves, "I *must* work"? Why, it is said that sometimes when the crowd sees a vessel going to pieces, and hear the cries of the drowning men, they seem as if they were all seized with madness, because, not being able to give vent to their kindness and brotherly feeling towards the perishing ones by any practical activity, they know not what to do, and are ready to sacrifice their own lives if they might but do something to save others. Men feel that they must work in the presence of so dreadful a need. And Christ saw this world of ours quivering over the pit of hell. He saw it floating, as it were, in an atmosphere of fire, and He wished to quench those flames, and make the world rejoice, and therefore He must work to that end. He could not, He could not possibly rest and be quiet. He knew not how to take His ease even at night—

"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer."

And when He was faint and weary, and needed to eat, He would not eat because the zeal of God's house had eaten Him up, and it was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him who sent Him. The love within and the need without acted towards one common end, and formed an intense necessity so that the Savior must work.

Moreover, you must remember that *He had come into this world with an aim which was not to be achieved without work, but which was a passion with Him; and therefore He must work because He desired to achieve His end*—the salvation of the many whom the Father had given to Him; the gathering together in one those who were scattered abroad; the finding of the lost sheep; the restoration of the fallen—He *must* accomplish these objectives. Eternal purposes must be fulfilled. His own surety engagements must be honored. He had loved His own which were in the world, and He loved them so that He could not leave the world until all His work should be completely done, and He should be able to say, "It is finished." So, hopefully looking forward to the recompense of the reward, anticipating the glory of bringing men from the thralldom of their sins, and conducting them into the tower of Salvation, He longed and panted to work. The soldier who is desirous of promotion scorns peace and longs for war, that he may have an opportunity of ascending in the ranks. The young man who wants to carve out a position is not satisfied to vegetate in a country village; he wants work, wants it because he knows that work is the way of rising in the world. It is right enough, if a man has a just ambition, that he should seek the means by which that ambition may be attained. Our Savior's ambition was to be crowned with the gems of the souls which He had saved, to be the great friend of man, the great Redeemer of mankind, and consequently He must work. He must be men's Savior; He cannot be their Savior without working; and, therefore, the passion within, the need without, and the great and all-absorbing aim which drew Him onward, furnished three cords which bound Him, like a sacrifice, to the horns of the altar. "I must work."

Now, brothers and sisters, without enlarging upon a theme so tempting, let us ask whether you and I feel the same compulsion; for if we are as Christ was in the world, if we are worthy to be called His followers at all, we must be compelled with His compulsion, we must be weighted with His load. *Do we feel as if we* MUST work? Oh, there are so many professors who feel that they must feed! No, they must *be* fed. They do not even get so far into activity as to desire to feed; but they must be fed as with a spoon—and they desire to have certain precious gospel truths broken down and dissolved into soup for them, and put into their mouths while they lie in bed, almost too idle to digest the food after they have received it. There are some other Christians who feel as if they must always find fault with other people's work, as if it were a passion with them to criticize and judge. Many besides these are there who must be excused from working; they will do anything to get out of any task; they count it no small thing if they can escape giving to any charitable or Christian organization, or if they can avoid exposing their own precious selves to any kind of sorrow or toil in the service of the Lord Jesus. I trust *we* are not of such a cowardly spirit as this. If we are, then let us leave off bearing the name of the gospel. As one said, "Either be a Stoic, or give up being called a Stoic," so I would either be a Christian, or else give up being called a Christian. This is not to be a Christian—to shun work for Christ. I do trust, however, that we have felt this compulsion—"I must work." Why *must* I work? That I may be saved? Oh, no! God forbid! I am saved, if I am a Christian—saved, not through my own works, but

through Christ's works. I have heard the gospel which tells me that there is life for a look at the crucified One. I have looked to Christ, and I am saved. Then why must I work? Why, *because* I am saved. If He bought me with His blood, I must spend myself for Him who bought me. If He sought me by His Spirit, I must give myself to Him who sought me. If He has taught me by His grace, I must tell others what I have learned from Him. The motive which compels Christian activity is not so base and selfish a one as that of obtaining heaven by it. Why, even a Romanist (a masterly Romanist however—strange anomaly that so sweet a song should come from so foul a cage of unclean birds!) could sing—

"My God, I love You not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love you not
Must burn eternally.
You, O my Savior, You did me
Upon the cross embrace;
For me did bear the nails and spear,
And manifold disgrace."

Our love is caused by Christ. His love to us makes us feel that we must work for Him. When we were little children, a kind friend made us very happy one day, and yet a second and a third time did that same friend make our little hearts leap for joy; and when we went to bed we said, before we fell asleep, "I wish we could do something for Mrs. So-and-So; I wish I could give Mrs. So-and-So something." Perhaps we had no money; but the next morning we got a few flowers out of the garden, and we set off so pleased to take our little bouquet to our kind friend, and we said, "Please accept this little present, for you have been so kind to me." We felt as if we could not help it, and we were only afraid lest our little present would not be received; and we felt that if we could have done 10, twenty, or 50 times as much, we would have thought it all too little; but it was our happiness to do what we did, and to wish to do more. The same spirit prompts us to wish to do something for the Lord Jesus. Oh, will He accept anything from me? Will He let me try to increase His glory? Will He allow me to feed His lambs, or to be a shepherd to His sheep, or to look after three or four girls in a Sunday school, or to watch over one child as for Him, or to give a tract away, or to subscribe of my substance to any of His interests? Oh, then, how good it is of Him to let me! How I wish I could do more! O that I had a thousand hands to work for Him, a thousand hearts and a thousand tongues that I might spend all for Him! I hope you feel, brothers and sisters, that the love of Christ which is in you makes you say, "I must work." Then, if you live in this neighborhood, and most of us, I suppose, do live this side of the water, can you go through the courts and streets, can you go into the darker parts of the neighborhood, those close to here which you know, without feeling, "I must work"? I wish, sometimes, that some of you people, some of you who have got on tolerably well in the world, and who live a little farther out in the country where the air gets a little purer—I wish you could be made to sniff sometimes the air in which poverty always lives in this city of ours, and I think you would feel, then, as if you must work. Our city missionaries must sometimes feel marvelously enthusiastic, I should think, from the sights which they see

and the sounds which they hear. They must feel as if they must work, for men are dying, hell is filling, the gospel is not taken to the people, and the people do not come to the gospel, and the multitude go their way as though there were no Christ, and no heaven, and would to God I could have said, no hell after they died; but there is their portion, and they live here as if they were preparing themselves for inheriting it. May we get, then, to understand, by God's grace, the first part of the text, "I must work."

II. Now, secondly, let us notice that here is A SPECIALITY OF WORK—"I must work the works of Him who sent Me."

There are plenty of people who say, "I must work," but there are very few who say, "I must work the works of him who sent me." Oh, the work, the brain-work and head-work that is done in London to get rich! It is very proper, of course. If a man wants to get on in the world, he must work. It is very well. I would not say to any young man, "Be idle." If you want to prosper in anything, throw your whole soul into it, and work as hard as you can. Many, many people feel the compulsion of working to get on, or working to support a family. Very proper indeed; but I need not exhort you to do it, for I dare say, as honest and moral men, you will feel that compulsion without any exhortation from me! Some work in order to get fame. Well, that is not so bad a thing in its way; but I need not speak about it, for those who choose that path will fall into it without my advice. But here is the point, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me." Christ came into this world neither to be a King among kings, nor to be famous among the famed, but to be a Servant of servants, and to fulfill the will of God. "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God." He came to do it, and, having come, He did it.

Observe the character of the work which Christ performed. It was not a work of His own devising. It was not a work which He had set to Himself of His own will, but it was a work which had been settled by His Father. "I came not to do My will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Observe too, that Christ made no choices about this work. He says, "I must work the *works,"* not some of them, but all of them, whether they should be works of drudgery or works of honor, bearing reproach for the truth, or bearing testimony to the truth; works of suffering Himself or works of relief to those who suffered; works of silent secret groaning, or works of ministry in which He rejoiced in spirit; works of prayer on the mountainside, or works of preaching on the mountain's brow. Christ had given Himself up unreservedly to do for God whatever the Father should bid Him do. All these works were works of mercy, works of soul-saving, disinterested work, works not selfish or egotistical. He saved others; Himself He could not save. They were not works by which He increased His own treasure, He distributed to the needy; not works by which He lifted Himself up, He condescended to men of low estate; not works by which He earned honor among men, He gave His back to the smiters; the reproaches of them who fell upon Him. His works were works of pure philanthropy to men, and of entire consecration to God.

I wonder whether you and I, as Christians, have ever fully and thoroughly realized a compulsion to do such works as these? "I must

work the works of Him who sent Me." O my brothers and sisters, it is so easy to work our own works, even in spiritual things, but it is so difficult to be brought to this—"I must work the works of Him who sent me." Understand me, there are 10,000 actions good in themselves, which it might not be right for me to choose as my avocation in life. I know a great many persons who think it is their business to preach, but who had much better make it their business to hear for a little while longer. We know some who think it is their business to take the headship of a class, but who might be amazingly useful by giving away some tracts, or by taking a seat in a class themselves for a little while. The fact is, that we are not to pick and choose the path of Christian service which we are to walk in, but we are to do the work of Him who sent us; and our goal should be, as there is so much work to be done, to find out what part of the work the Master would have us do. Our prayer should be, "Show me what You would have me do"—have *me* do in particular; not what is generally right, but what is particularly right for me to do. My servant might, perhaps, think it a very proper thing for her to arrange my papers for me in my study, but I should feel but a very slender amount of gratitude to her. If, however, she will have a cup of coffee ready for me early in the morning, when I have to go out to a distant country town to preach, I shall be much more likely to appreciate her services. So, some friends think, "How I could get on if *I* were in such-and-such a position, if I were made a deacon, if I were elevated to such a post." Go your way, and work as your Master would have you. You will do better where He puts you than you will where you put yourself. You are no servant, indeed, at all, when you pick and choose your service, for the very spirit, the very essence of service consists in saying, "Not my will, but Yours be done. I wait for orders from the throne—teach me what You would have me do."

On this point, however, there is, perhaps, less need of insisting than there is of insisting upon the other. We must feel ourselves impelled to some form or other of spiritual effort, which shall be disinterested, for the good of others, and I ask you Christian men and women, *Do you all feel this?* Oh, what wonders were done by two or three hundred persons after our Lord went up to heaven! Why, they were enough for the evangelization of a world! Here is this great city of London of ours, with its three million and more of inhabitants—I know not how many Christian souls there may be in it, but there must be many thousands, and yet up to this day we have been insufficient for the evangelization of this city; for, instead of our meeting its demands, it is a simple matter of statistics, that 10 years ago London was better provided for, than with all our efforts, it is now! And is this to be endured? If there were a necessity for this, we might with weeping bow down to the grim necessity; but as there is none, as it is with ourselves that the fault must be, as it still remains with us, let us ask, What is the cause of the mischief? It is this—*that all Christians have not learned yet the truth of God that each Christian is personally to do the work of Him who sent him.* We are not to deputize our ministers to do it, nor to think that we can discharge the service of God by proxy, but each man and woman, personally, must give himself and herself to the service of Christ, feeling, each one, that he or

she can read this text for himself—*"I, I, I*, must work the works of Him who sent me; I must do it if nobody else does; I must—I feel a compulsion; I must in some form or other give myself to those works which are peculiarly the works of God, who sends His people into this wicked world on purpose that they may do them."

May I say here, by way of illustration, to prove to you that progress is not impossible if we were but willing to make the effort, that probably there is no religious movement in England which is so formidable, which has advanced so rapidly, as that movement of Ritualism, which we sometimes call Puseyism! It is advancing rapidly, and it is advancing in two quarters—two quarters which ought to shame us forever, because they are the two most inaccessible quarters. That is to say, you shall find rampant Puseyism laying hold upon the upper classes, getting into the drawing rooms which we thought could not be entered; storming what we thought to be impregnable citadels of rank and lofty respectability; and finding its victims and its worshippers there, and finding them in such a style, and getting them into its grip so wholly and completely, that the substance of the rich is given far more thoroughly to their false faith than our substance among us is given to our true faith. Then, next, the greatest advance of this system has been made among the poorest of the poor, those people who, it is said, will not come to hear the gospel. Oh, but that is a lie, for they will come to hear the gospel if the gospel is but preached so that they can understand it! But it is to the scandal of many Christian churches that these poor people will not go to them, and yet these very same people are affected by this Puseyism, yes, and get converted to it, too, and go down upon their knees as earnest worshippers, and are thorough believers in the whole thing! Now, how is this done? Well, I will tell you. It is in this way—the priests who believe in this thing, do honestly believe in it; they believe it to be the truth of God, and they hold it with a grip that is not relaxed, and they are not ashamed to suffer reproach for it, but come out boldly in their own colors, not hiding, and playing, and shuffling, as some others have done, ashamed to confess what they have done, but they have come out boldly. And let me say, all honor to them for the honorable courage they have displayed in their dishonorable work! I like to give the devil his due, and if you see courage even in a foe, you can but let it be called courage. I like, I must say I reverence, the courage of those who will stand up for Rome in the teeth of a prevalent Protestantism, as well as the courage of the Protestant who stands up against Rome in the midst of a prevalent Romanism. Now, if they have done all this, and they have done it very much through the real earnestness of the priests, have we not some such courage and earnestness as that among our ministers? I hope that if the ministers have failed here, each one will begin to correct himself, and that we shall become as earnest and as bold in our cause as ever they can be in theirs.

But the next thing is this—*they make all their members and all their admirers earnest missionaries.* You shall find them spreading their little tracts, dropping their books, saying a word to those young men in the shop, talking a little to that young lady in the drawing room. You shall find them everywhere sending round their sisters of mercy. A minister I

know went into the house of one of his members, and said, "There is a sister of mercy going round near here; does she call at this house?" "Oh, yes," was the answer, "certainly. She goes into every room in the house." "Well," he said, "but I did not know that I dared to go into every room; does the sister of mercy really go into every room here in the house?" "Oh, yes, sir, and into every room in the street." "Well, how is that?" "Oh, I don't know, sir, but she gets in somehow or other." And why shouldn't we get in somehow or other? What they can do, why cannot we do? Shall they do after their fashion what we dare not do and cannot do? Oh, it is a fine thing that the soldiers of the Pope should be braver than the soldiers of the cross! Shall it be so? Oh, God forbid! May the old spirit, and the old valor, and the old enthusiasm come back to the Christian church, and there is enough yet to save London, there is enough yet for us to send back the tide of Popery; there is enough yet to vindicate the gospel, and to show that it is yet a thing of power, mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Only we must come to this, that our work, our activity, must drive itself into the special channel of doing the work of Him who has sent us, and doing it at once!

III. Thirdly, as there is a necessity for work, and a specialty of effort, so there is A LIMITATION OF TIME: "I must work the work of Him who sent Me *while it is day."*

This limitation of time sounds very weightily to my ears, coming as it does from the lips of Christ. Jesus Christ, the immortal, the ever-living, yet says, *"I, I must work while it is day!"* My beloved, if anyone could have postponed work, it was our eternal Lord. See Him. He is in heaven, but He is still working. There are a thousand ways in which He can serve His church. We believe not in the intercession of the *saints;* they cannot work for us in that land of rest after they quit this world of labor; but we do believe in the intercession of the saints' Master. He can pray for us still. The Head of the church is always active, and yet He said, "I must work while it is day!" Then, see with what force it comes to you and to me, for we can do nothing more with our hands when once the turf has covered our head! All as to work is over then, so heed it as an omen; that word is full of significance which you hear—"while it is day." How long will it be "day" with us? Some days are very short. These wintry days are soon over. My young sister, my young brother, your day may be very brief; *work while you have it.* Is there a sign of consumption? Work, then; do not make that an excuse for idleness, but an argument for labor. Work while it *is* day. Or, if there is no such sign, remember that still your sun may go down before it reaches its noon. O young man, wait not till your powers are ripe and your opportunities are large, but say, "I must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day." You may never live to be twenty-one. Oh, be a soul-winner before you are a man! Dear sister, seek to be a mother in Israel, a matron for Jesus Christ while yet you are but a girl. Seek to win souls for Jesus while you, yourselves, are but lambs in Jesus' fold. "While it is day." Some of you are getting gray and your day cannot be very much longer. Eventide has come, and the shadows are drawn out. Now you must not make the infirmities of old age an excuse for being altogether out of harness. The Master asks not from you what you cannot render, but such strength as you still have, give to Him

"while it is day," feeling that you must work the works of Him who sent you.

"While it is day; while it is day." If I had a prophet's eye, and could pick out the persons here for whom the bell will toll during the next month, how this text might suit them! "While it is day!" Dear mother, if you had only another 30 days—another month to live, and you knew it—how you would pray for your children during that month! How you would talk to those dear boys about their souls, though you have never taken them aside and spoken to them before! Dear Sunday school teachers, if you knew that you should only go to school one, or two, or three, or four more Sundays, how solemnly would you now begin to talk with those children in your class! And yet, remember, this is the way in which we ought to live and work always. You know Baxter's words—

"I preach as tho' I ne'er might preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men."

Let us do the same. Then, supposing you should live 10, 20, or 30 years longer, yet how brief those years are; and when they are gone, they seem but as yesterday! So let me even ring the bell myself; let me sound the text like a knell in your ear, "While it is day! While it is day! While it is day!"

And, having thus reminded you of your own mortality, let me give the text another sound, as I bid you remember that the "day" may soon be passed, not to you, but *to the objects of your care.* Let me, if you would loiter, remind you that there are two lives here to be insured—another life as well as your own. "While it is day." You cannot speak; you will not have an opportunity of speaking to some people in London tomorrow, *for they will die tonight.* It is impossible that you should have an opportunity of speaking to 2,000 of them next week, for they will die this week; the bills of mortality will demand the insatiable hunger of death will call for them. They must go. Oh, work, then, "While it is day" with them!

And with some it is "day" only for a very short time, even though they may live long; for, with some men, their "day" is only the one occasion when they go to a place of worship; the one occasion when there is sickness in the house, and the missionary enters; the one occasion when a Christian comes across their path and has a fair opportunity of speaking to them of Christ. Many of our friends here in London have not a day of mercy, in a certain sense. They do not hear the gospel; it does not come across their path. A bishop once said that it would have been well for some people in London if they had been born in Calcutta, for if they had been born in Calcutta, Christian earnestness might have found them out; but living as they do, in some of the back slums of London, none care for their souls at all. Ah, then, since their day may be so brief, and yours is so brief too, let each gird up his loins tonight, and say, "I must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day!"

You came over Blackfriars Bridge tonight—you may drop down dead on it as you go back! You have come from your house tonight, and you have left at home a dear friend to whom you wish to speak about his soul. Do it tonight, for he may die in the night. I think I read it in the life of Dr. Chalmers, that on one occasion he spent an evening with a number of friends, and there was present a Highland chieftain, a very

interesting character. They spent the evening in telling anecdotes of their lives, and repeating extracts from many entertaining works of voyages and travels—spent the evening, as we should think, very properly indeed, and after having very much enjoyed themselves, they went to bed. At midnight, the whole family was startled from their sleep, for the Highland chieftain was in the pangs and agonies of death. He went up to his chamber in sound health, but died in the night. The impression upon Chalmers' mind was this: "Had I known that he would have so died, would not the evening have been differently spent? Then ought it not to have been spent in a very different manner by men all of whom might have died?" He felt as if the blood of that man's soul, in some measure, fell upon him; the occurrence itself was a lasting blessing to him. May it be so to us in the hearing of the story, and from this time forth may we work with all our might "while it is day."

IV. We close tonight with the last words of the text: "The night comes when no man can work." Here is the REMEMBRANCE OF OUR MORTALITY.

"The night comes." You cannot put it off. As sure as night comes in its due season to the earth, so death comes to you. There are no arts nor maneuvers by which night can be deferred or prevented, nor by which death can be postponed or altogether adjourned. "The night comes," however much we may dread it, or however much we may long for it; it comes with stealthy tread, surely, and in its appointed time. "The night comes." The night comes for the pastor who has labored for his flock; for the Evangelist, who has preached with earnestness; for the Sunday school teacher who has loved her charge; for the missionary who has worked for souls. "The night comes." The night comes for the sitters in the pews; for the father, the mother, the daughter, the husband, the wife. "The night comes." Dear hearer, shall you need to be reminded that the night comes for you? Will you take it home to yourself, or will you, nursing man's hapless delusion, "think all men mortal but yourself?" The night comes when the eyes shall be closed, when the limbs shall grow cold and stiff, when the pulse shall be feeble, and at last shall stop its beating. "The night comes." Solomon thought this out for all mankind: "No man has power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither has he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war." To the Christian worker it is sometimes a dreary thought. I have plans in action for the cause of God, upon some of which I have just newly entered, and I sometimes think I should like to live to see them in greater maturity. Perhaps I may, but I daily feel as if I will not. Constantly it haunts me—I may commence these things, but if I do not do all I can do today, I may never have a tomorrow; and, therefore, I say again what I have said a thousand times in my own soul, that I will do all I can now. As for the years that are to come, they must shift for themselves. It is no use, when starting plans, to look forward to what they may grow into in years to come, and then to write down as our work what may spring out of our work. No, we must do immediately and at once all that has to be done. God can afford to wait with His work, but we cannot afford to delay with ours. We must work now, "while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work." The coming of the night, though always comfortable to

the Christian when he recollects that he shall see his Master, is yet sometimes a very very heavy thought to us who are engaged in many works for Christ, and who would like to live to see some of those works prospering.

How dreary the conclusion! *"When no man can work."* Mother, you cannot bend over your children and teach them the way of life when you have departed. If you would have them taught in the things of God, your voice, at least, will never teach them *then* of the love of Jesus. Missionary, if that district of yours is unattended, and souls are lost, you at least can never make up for the damage you have done, for the mischief which you have caused. Your memory and your love are past. You are gone. The place that knew you once knows you no more. Among the deeds of the living you can take no share. If you lifted, by your example, the floodgates of sin, you cannot return to let them down again, or to stem the current. If you missed opportunities of serving Jesus here, you cannot come back again to retrieve them. If one were a warrior, and had lost a battle, one might pant for another day to dawn for another conflict yet to retrieve the campaign; but when you lose the battle of life, you shall never have it to fight again. The tradesman may have gone bankrupt once, but he trusts that, with more careful dealing, he may yet achieve success. But bankruptcy in our spiritual service is bankruptcy forever, and we have no chance of retrieving our loss. It is a night in which no man can work. The myriads before the throne of God can do no service here. The poverty of London they cannot alleviate; its shame and sin they cannot remove. They can praise God, but they cannot help man. They can sing unto Him who loved them and washed them, but they cannot preach of Him, nor proclaim to those who need to be washed at the Fountain that is filled with His blood. It would almost to be desired that they could, for surely they would do the work so much better than we can do it! But the Master has decreed otherwise. They must fight no more—they must stand and look on at the battle. They must delve the field no longer—they shall eat the fruit, but they cannot till the soil. The work is left to those who are still here. Let us have no regrets because they cannot join in it, but rather let us thank God that He reserves to us all the honor as well as all the labor. Let us plunge into the work now. As the British soldiers in battle, when few were told by their king that he hoped there was not one man there who desired that they should be more; for, said he, "the fewer the men, the greater each man's share of the honor," so let us not desire that we should have helpers from the skies. With the might of God upon us; with the open Word still full of precious promises; with the mercy seat still rich in blessing; with the Holy Spirit, the irresistible Deity, still dwelling in us; with the precious name of Jesus which makes hell tremble, still to cheer us, let us go forth feeling that we "must work while it is day: for the night comes when no man can work." Let us go forth determined that we will work while the day lasts—and hearing the chariot wheels of eternity behind us, we will speed on with all our might and main.

But all that I have been saying applies but very little to some of you, for you have never given yourselves to God. You are still servants of Satan, and you cannot serve God. O poor souls, do you know why it is

that we want Christian people to be earnest? Why, it is in order that *you* may be saved! We would not have much need of all this stirring up of Christians if it were not for you. You are without God; you are without Christ. You are on your way to everlasting ruin, some of you; and some of you, too, who have heard the gospel for many years, and know as much about it as I do, though you know nothing about its power within your own souls. Is it not strange that while we are so much in earnest about you, you are not in earnest about yourselves? If there were a woman's child out there in the street, and a dozen women tried to catch it up before it was run over by a carriage, you would think it was a very strange thing if the mother stood by calm and cool, unexcited, or, as it were, uninterested about it. And yet here is your soul, and there are full as many people in this venerable chapel tonight who feel anxious about you, and wish they could save you, yet you do not care about your own soul! Well, now, if you should be lost forever, it will be no wonder, will it? You do not value yourself at all. You throw yourself away. Who shall be blamed for this? O dear hearers, shall this be one of the thorns in your pillow forever, "I took no thought about my soul; I set no value upon it, but I carelessly cast it away"? Shall this keen remorse keep up the unquenchable flames that shall forever torture your conscience: "I would not think of everlasting things; I played the fool, and danced my way into hell; I trifled where God was earnest; I was careless where ministers wept; I was frivolous where Christ bled"? Oh, I beseech you, consider your ways, and remember that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved! Believe in Him! Trust Him! That is the way of salvation. Rest upon Him; and the Lord grant that when you have so done, being saved, you may feel the impulse of my text and say, "I, too, must join with the band of workers saved by Christ; I too must say as Christ said, 'I must work the works of Him who sent Me, while it is day: for the night comes, when no man can work.' "

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

IN THE HAY FIELD
NO. 757

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 23, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He causes the grass to grow for the cattle."
Psalm 104:14.

WE who are condemned to live in this great wilderness of brick are very likely to forget the seasons altogether; and our friends who live out in the green country, and see the changing seasons, are quite as apt to hear the voices of the seasons with their ears only, but not to learn the inward meaning with their hearts. Spring, summer, autumn and winter, are God's four evangelists whom He sends into this world to teach those who are willing to be taught; but the most of men are far too much intent upon the problem of how they may be fed, to care for spiritual instruction. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." As for others, in whom the god of this world is reigning, they will not hear though heaven, and earth, and hell, should mingle their voices into one great thunder-clap. Just now all the world is busy with ingathering the hay, and you could scarcely ride for a few minutes in the country without enjoying the delicious fragrance of the hay field, and hearing the sharpening of the mower's scythe. I believe there is a gospel in the hay field, and that gospel we intend this morning to bring out as we may be enabled.

Our text conducts us at once to the spot, and we shall therefore need no preface. "He causes the grass to grow for the cattle"—three things we shall notice; first, *that grass is in itself instructive;* secondly, that *grass is far more so when God is seen in it;* and thirdly, that *by the growth of grass for the cattle, the ways of divine grace may be illustrated.*

I. First then, "He causes the grass to grow for the cattle." Here we have something WHICH IS IN ITSELF INSTRUCTIVE. There is scarcely any emblem, with the exception of water and light, which you will find more frequently used by inspiration than the grass of the field.

In the first place, the grass may be instructively looked upon as the symbol of *our mortality,* "All flesh is grass." The whole history of man may be seen in the meadow. He springs up green and tender, subject to the frosts of infancy which imperil his young life; he grows, he comes to maturity, he puts on beauty even as the grass is adorned with flowers, and the meadows are bedecked with varied hues; but after a while his strength departs, and his beauty is wrinkled even as the grass withers, and is followed by a fresh generation, which withers in its turn. Like ourselves, the grass ripens but to decay. The sons of men come to maturity in due time, and then decline and wither as the green herb. Some of the grass is not left to come to ripeness at all, but the mower's scythe sud-

denly removes it, even as swift-footed death overtakes the careless children of Adam. "In the morning it flourishes, and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers. For we are consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath are we troubled." "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." This is very humbling for us to remember, but we frequently need to be reminded of it, or we dream of immortality beneath the stars. We are and we are not; we are not substance but shadow, our years are as a shadow which declines; and, as for our age, it is gone as a weaver's shuttle; we pass away like the swift ships; we fly as the eagle; we burst as the bubble; we sink back into the wave of time that bears us as the foam dissolves into the sea—

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

We ought never to tread upon the grass without remembering that whereas the green sod covers our graves, it also reminds us of them, and preaches with every blade it has, a sermon to us concerning our mortality of which the text is, "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field."

In the second place, grass is frequently used in Scripture as an emblem of *the wicked.* David tells us from his own experience that the heart of a righteous man is apt to grow envious of the wicked when he sees the prosperity of the ungodly. We have seen them spreading themselves like green bay trees, and apparently fixed and rooted in their places; and when we have smarted under our own troubles, and felt that all the day long we were scourged, and chastened every morning, we have been apt to say, "How is this just? How can this be consistent with the moral government of God?" But we are reminded that in a short time we shall pass by the place of the wicked, and lo, it shall not be; we shall diligently consider his place, and lo, it shall not be, for he is soon cut down as the grass, and withers as the green herb. The grass withers, the flower thereof fades away, and even so shall pass away forever the glory and excellence of those who build upon the estate of time, and dig for lasting comfort in the mines of earth. It is true, the kings of the earth are most often on the side of evil, and the great ones with their pompous state are usually against the Most High; but let not God's people mourn, though waters of a full cup are wrung out of them, for the portion of the wicked is not forever; they shall have their day, and then shall come their endless night. They are set in lofty places, but they also stand in slippery places; they shall be brought to destruction as in a moment, "As a dream when one awakes; so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image." O, you who know not the Lord, and rest not in the atonement of the Lord Jesus, see to what an end you shall come—your end shall be the oven! As the Eastern farmer gathers up the green herb, and despite its former beauty, casts it into the furnace, such must be your lot, O vainglorious sinners! Thus will the judge command His angels, "Bind them up in bundles to burn." Where now your merriment? Where now your confidence? Where now your pride and your pomp? Where now your boasts

and your loud-mouthed blasphemies? They are silenced forever, for, as the thorns crackle under the pot, but are speedily consumed, and leave nothing but a handful of white ashes, so shall it be with the wicked; they shall pass away in the fire of God's wrath, and the flames shall utterly consume them.

It is more pleasing to remember that the grass is used in Scripture as a picture of *the elect of God.* The wicked are comparable to the dragons of the wilderness, but God's own people shall spring up in their place, for it is written, "In the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes." The desert of sin shall yet be green with divine grace. The elect are compared to grass, because of their number as they shall be in the latter days, and because of their rapid growth. You remember the passage, "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." O that the long expected day might soon come, when God's people should no longer be a little flock, but when a multitude shall come to Christ, and the redeemer shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. It is said of Zion's children, "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses"—two of the fastest growing things we know of—so shall a nation be born in a day; so shall crowds be converted at once; for when the Spirit of God shall be mightily at work in the midst of the church, men shall fly unto Christ as doves fly to their windows, so that the astonished church shall cry, "These, where had they been?" O that we might live to see the age of gold, the time which prophets have foretold and longed for, when the company of God's people shall be as innumerable as the blades of grass in the meadows, and grace and truth shall flourish where once everything was barrenness.

How like the grass are God's people for this reason, that they are absolutely dependent upon the influences of heaven! Our fields are parched if showers and gentle dews are withheld, and what are our souls without the gracious visitations of the Spirit? Sometimes through severe trials our wounded hearts are like the mown grass, and then we have the promise, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth." Our sharp troubles have taken away our beauty, and lo, the Lord visits us, and we revive again. Thank God for that old saying, which is a gracious doctrine as well as a true proverb, "Each blade of grass has its own drop of dew." God is pleased to give His own peculiar mercies to each one of His own people. "Your blessing is upon Your people." The river of God, which is full of water, waters the church, which is a vineyard, in which every vine is so dependent upon God that He must be its heavenly dew, or it will dry up at once. As you look at the fields of grass, think of them as being comparable to the great company of the redeemed whom God shall make to grow upon the face of the earth.

Once again, grass is comparable to *the food with which the Lord supplies the necessities of His chosen ones.* Take the 23rd Psalm, and you

have the metaphor worked out in the sweetest form of pastoral song. "He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters." Just as the sheep has nourishment according to its nature, and this nourishment is abundantly found for it by its shepherd so that it not only feeds, but then lies down in the midst of the fodder, satiated with plenty, and perfectly content and at ease—even so are the people of God when Jesus Christ leads them into the pastures of the covenant, and opens up to them the precious truths of God upon which their souls shall be fed. Beloved, have we not proven that promise true in this house of prayer, "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined"? Why, my soul has sometimes fed upon Christ till I have felt as if I could receive no more, and then I have laid down in the bounty of my God to take my rest, satisfied with favor, and full of the goodness of the Lord. Whenever you see the sheep at noontide, resting in the rich herbage, beneath the spreading oak, think of that inquiry of Solomon when he said, "Tell me where You feed, where you make Your flock to rest at noon," and when you see the herds with all their needs supplied both in summer and in winter, then sing with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

Thus you see the grass, itself, is not without instruction for those who will incline their ear. It is a memorial of our mortality, and of the passing away of the wicked; it is a picture of the elect of God when watered with the dew of heaven, and an emblem of the spiritual meat with which God will satisfy the sheep of His pasture.

II. In the second place, GOD IS SEEN IN THE GROWING OF THE GRASS. He is seen first as a worker, "He *causes* the grass to grow." He is seen secondly as a caretaker, He causes the grass to grow *for the cattle.*

1. First, as a *worker*, God is to be seen in every blade of grass, if we have but eyes to discern Him. A blind world this, which always talks about "natural laws," and "the effects of natural causes," but forgets that laws cannot operate of themselves, and that natural causes, so called, are not causes at all unless the First Cause shall set them in motion. The old Romans used to say, *God* thundered; *God* rained. We say, *it* thunders, *it* rains. What "it"? All those expressions are subterfuges to escape from the thought of God. We commonly say, "How wonderful are the works of *nature!"* What is "nature"? Do you know what *nature* is? I remember a lecturer in the street, an infidel, speaking about nature, and he was asked by a Christian man standing by whether he would tell him what nature was. "Walk in the fields, and see nature"—"nature did this and nature did that"—these are common phrases, but is there any meaning in them? Is not that an old heathen way of talking? If we see aright, we see God working everywhere. We frequently talk as if we were trying to thrust our God into the distance. Our good old forefathers, the Puritans, when they needed rain, used to pray that God would unstop the bottles of heaven; at another time that He would be pleased to bind up the clouds, that there might not be too much rain. We run to the barom-

eter, or grumble at the bad weather. They referred all natural phenomena to the Most High, and were accustomed to see Him at work in all the events of life. We have grown so wise nowadays that we find a thousand second causes interposing between the world and its Maker. Unhappy is the wisdom whose boasted discoveries would gladly push us away from our heavenly Father into a wild sea of laws and second causes. To my mind, it would be even better if we could get back to the untutored mind of the Indian who sees God in every cloud and hears Him in the wind. We need our God—we are like orphans without Him; and it is well to be reminded, in the simple language of the text, that He is very near us, for He makes the grass to grow for the cattle. The simple production of grass is not the result of natural law apart from the actual work of God; mere law would be inoperative unless the great Master Himself sent a thrill of power through the matter which is regulated by the law—unless, like the steam engine, which puts force into all the spinning-jennies and wheels of a cottonmill, God Himself were the motive power to make every wheel revolve. How I could fall down and find rest on the grass as on a royal couch, now that I know that my God is there at work for His creatures!

Having asked you to see God as a worker, I want you to make use of this—therefore I bid you see God in *common things*. He makes the grass to grow—grass is a common thing. You see it every day everywhere, yet there is God in it. Dissect it and pull it to pieces. There are the attributes of God illustrated in every single flower of the field, and in every green leaf. Come, my friends, see God in your common matters, your daily afflictions, your common joys, your everyday mercies. Do not say, "I must see a miracle before I see God." In truth, *everything* is a miracle, *everything* wonderful, *everything* teeming with marvel. See God in the bread upon the table and the water in your cup. It will be the happiest way of living if you can say in each providential circumstance, "My Father has done all this." See Him in common things, I say, and see Him in little things. The little things of life are the greatest troubles. A man will bear that his house is burned down more quietly than he will bear to see an ill-cooked piece of meat upon his table, when he reckoned upon its being done to a turn. It is the *little* stone which gets into the shoe and makes the pilgrim limp. Oh, but to see God in little things, to believe that there is as much the presence of God in a dry leaf falling from the elm as in the avalanche which crushes a village; to believe that the guidance of every drop of spray, when the wave breaks on the rock, is as much under the hand of God as the guidance of the mightiest planet when steered in its courses; to see God in the little as well as in the great is true wisdom.

Think, too, of God working in the *solitary things,* for the grass does not merely grow around our populous cities, and where men take care of it, but up there on the side of the bleak Alps, where no traveler has ever passed. Where only the eyes of the wild bird have beheld their lonely vegetation, the moss and the grass come to perfection, and display all their beauty, for God's works are fair to other eyes than those of mortals. And you, solitary child of God, dwelling far away from any friend, unknown

and obscure in a remote hamlet; or you in the midst of London, hiding away in your little attic, unknown to fame, and forsaken by friendship, you are not forgotten by the love of heaven. He makes the grass to grow all alone, and shall not He make you flourish in loneliness? He can bring forth your graces and educate you for the skies in solitude and neglect. The grass, you know, is a thing we tread upon—nobody thinks of grass—men pass over it and have no compassion for the stems which bend beneath their weight, and yet God makes it grow. Perhaps you are oppressed and down-trodden, but let not this depress your spirit, for God executes righteousness for all those who are oppressed—He makes the grass to grow, and He can make your heart to flourish under all the oppressions and afflictions of life, so that you shall still be happy and holy though all the world marches over you; still living in the Immortal Life which God Himself bestows upon you though hell itself set its heel upon you. Poor and needy one, unknown, unobserved, oppressed and down-trodden, God makes the grass to grow and He will take care of you.

As I turned over this text in my mind, to catch the various gleams of light which glance from it as from a prism, I thought, "How many are those blades of grass!" Set a child to count them, even in one acre, and how long the task will occupy; and yet each one of those blades God makes to grow as much as if there were not another in the entire field. So with all the myriads of God's people—He preserves each child as if He had no other; He loves as much every single one of all the blood-bought seed as if it were the only object of divine grace, the only one that should sing within the pearly gates. Be of good comfort, then, the God who abounds in mercy towards the grass of the field will not forget you.

2. But I said we should see in the text God also as a great *caretaker*. "He causes the grass to grow *for the cattle."* Does God, then, care for oxen, or does He say it altogether for our sakes? "You shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn," shows that God has a care for the beasts of the field; but it shows much more than that, namely, that He would have those who work for Him fed as they work. God cares for *the beasts,* and makes grass to grow for them. Then, my soul, though sometimes you have said with David, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You," yet God cares for me. Do you remember our sermon upon the ravens' cry? (See Sermon #672, Volume 12—THE RAVENS' CRY—read/download, by God's grace, all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons, and 574 Spanish translations free of charge at www.spurgeongems.org.) "He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry"—there you have an instance of His care for birds, and here we have His care for beasts; and though you, my hearer, may seem to yourself to be as black and defiled as a raven, and as far from anything spiritually good as the beasts, yet take comfort from this text; He gives to beasts their food, and He will give to you, though you think yourself to be beast-like, what your spirit needs at His hands.

Observe, He cares for these beasts that are *helpless* in caring for themselves. The cattle could not plant the grass, nor cause it to grow. Though they can do nothing in the matter, yet He does it all for them; *He* causes the grass to grow. You who are as helpless as oxen to help your-

selves, who can only stand and moan out your misery, but know not what to do, God can help you in His loving-kindness, and favor you in His tenderness. Now let the bleating of your prayer go up to heaven, let the moans of your desires go up to Him, poor guilty ones, and help shall come to you though you cannot help yourselves. We generally say beasts are *dumb and speechless things,* yet God makes the grass grow for them. Will He hear those that cannot speak, and will He not hear those who can? The beasts shed no tears of penitence, and pour forth no sobs and sighs of fervent prayer, and yet their needs are supplied—will God let that poor young man yonder continue month after month seeking Him, and will He not be found of him? Shall that poor woman's briny tears all fall in vain, that poor broken heart cry out in bitterness, and meet with no response? Shall the Lord of mercy answer the beasts, and not hear men who are made in His own image? Since our God views with kind consideration the cattle in the field, He will surely have compassion upon His own sons and daughters when they desire to seek His face! How often the cattle are oppressed by man! I am sure it is painful to see them driven through these streets, bruised and faint, with their poor tongues hanging out of their thirsty mouths. I wish the authorities would provide suitable drinking troughs for them, for at present their sufferings are a disgrace to our city. It is frequently so sickening a sight to see poor tortured cattle in our thoroughfares, that it makes one long to fly from such brutality, and cry—

"Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless mass of shade,
Where sights of cruel men and maddened beasts
Might never reach us more."

Yet the great God looks after those poor dumb cattle whom men despise. Comfortable thought for some of you who are of the meekest and lowliest spirit. You despise yourselves, and others despise you, but *He* who causes the grass to grow for the cattle, has an eye to you. Man may have nothing for you but strokes from the rod, thoughtless, heartless man may goad and vex your spirit, and drive you through the streets of this busy world, without so much as a drop of comfort to cool your burning tongue and fevered brain, when you are fainting with many cares and fears, but God thinks of you, God cares for you still. When your father and your mother forsake you, then the Lord will take you up. The cattle, forlorn as they are, have God to think of them, and so have you; shall they be silently trustful, and will you be noisily complaining?

There is this also to be said, God not only thinks of the cattle, taking care of them, but *the food* which He provides for them is fit food—He causes *grass* to grow for the cattle, just the sort of food which they require. Even thus the Lord God provides fit sustenance for His people. Depend upon Him by faith and wait upon Him in prayer, and you shall have food convenient for you. You shall find in God's mercy just that which your nature desires, suitable supplies for your grievous needs.

This convenient food the Lord takes care to reserve for the cattle, for no one eats the cattle's food but the cattle. There is grass for them, and

nobody else cares for it, and thus it is kept for them; even so God has a special food for His own people—He knows how to preserve it, too, and keep it for them and them only. "The secret of the Lord is with them who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." Though the grass is free to all men who choose to eat it, yet no creature cares for it except the cattle for whom it is prepared; and though the grace of God is free to all men, yet no man cares for it except the elect of God for whom He prepared it, and whom He prepares to receive it. There is as much reserve of the grass for the cattle as if there were walls around it—no one else eats it—no one else cares for it; and so, though the grace of God is free, and there is no bound set round about it, yet it is as much reserved as if it were restricted, and none might receive it but the elect of God.

God is seen in the grass as the worker and the caretaker: then let us see His hand *in providence* at all times. Let us see it and lean upon it, not only when we have abundance, but even when we have none; for the grass is preparing for the cattle even in the depth of winter. God is preparing and breaking the soil; He is sending the juices into the roots, giving the roots a little rest that they may afterwards bring forth abundance. And you, you sons of sorrow, in your trials and troubles, are still cared for by God; He has an end to serve in all your griefs and miseries; He will accomplish His own divinely gracious purpose in you—only be still and see the salvation of God! Every winter's night has a direct connection with the joyous days of mowing and reaping, and each time of grief is linked to future joy.

III. Our third head is most interesting. GOD'S WORKING IN THE GRASS FOR THE CATTLE GIVES US ILLUSTRATIONS CONCERNING DIVINE GRACE.

I ask every Christian here to give me his earnest attention for a few minutes, and I think he may hear something which may cheer him. I will suppose that I am soliloquizing, and I will say to myself as I read the text, "He causes the grass to grow for the cattle. Here I perceive a satisfying provision for that form of creature. Now, I am also a creature, but I am a nobler creature than the cattle! I cannot imagine for a moment that God will provide all that the cattle needs and not provide for me. But naturally I feel uneasy: I cannot find in this world what I need—if I were to win all its riches I would still be discontented; and when I have all that heart could wish of time's treasures, yet still my heart feels as if it were empty. There must be somewhere or other something that will satisfy me as a man with an immortal soul. God altogether satisfies the ox; He must therefore have something or other that would altogether satisfy me if I could get it. There is the grass, the cattle get it, and when they have eaten their share, they lie down and seem perfectly contented. Now, all I have ever found, as an unconverted man, has never satisfied me so that I could lie down and be content; there must be, then, something somewhere that would content me if I could get at it." Is not that good reasoning? I ask both the Christian and the unbeliever, to go with me so far; but then let us proceed another step: "The cattle do get what they need—

not only is the grass provided, but they get it. Well, then, why should not I obtain what I need? I find my soul hungering and thirsting after something more than I can see with my eyes or hear with my ears; there must be something to satisfy my soul, why should not I find it? The cattle find that which satisfies them—why should I not obtain what would satisfy me? There must be such a thing: I cannot suppose that my heavenly Father made me as a creature without making something also that could satisfy my largest desires. There is such a thing; and surely if the cattle get what they need, I shall not be left unsupplied." Then, I begin to ask in prayer, "What is this which You, O God, have provided to satisfy my soul?" And while I am praying, I also meditate and think, "Well, God has given to the cattle something which is consonant to their nature—they are nothing but flesh, and flesh is grass, there is therefore grass for their flesh. But, then, though I am flesh, I am something else besides, I am spirit. Then, if I am to get something to satisfy me, it must be spiritual—a spiritual meat. Where is it?" When I turn to God's word, I find there that though the grass withers, the word of the Lord endures forever; and the word which God speaks unto us is spirit and life. "Oh, then," I say, "Here is something spiritual for my spiritual nature, something suitable to me as an immortal being." O may God help me to know what that spiritual meat is, and enable me to lay hold upon it, for I perceive that though God provides the grass for the cattle, *the cattle must eat it themselves.* They are not fed if they lie down and refuse to come and eat.

Then what must I do? Must I imitate the cattle and eat that which God provides for me? What do I find provided in Scripture? I find the Lord Jesus Christ laid down as the food of my soul. I am told that He came into this world to suffer, and bleed, and die instead of me; and that if I trust in Him I shall be saved; and being saved, the thoughts of His love will give solace and joy to me and be my strength, the strength of my life and my portion forever. I do not find the cattle bringing any purchase money to the pasture, but they enter it and receive their portion—they open their mouths and receive what they need. Even so do I by an act of faith in Jesus. Lord, give me grace to feed upon Christ; make me hunger and thirst after Him; give me the faith by which I may be a receiver of Him, so that I may be satisfied with favor, and full of the goodness of the Lord.

I think my text, though it looked small, begins to grow and swell as we meditate upon it! Now, I want to introduce you to a few more thoughts on this matter as illustrations of divine grace. *Preventing grace may here be seen in a symbol.* Before the cattle were made, in this world there was grass. We find in the first chapter of Genesis, God provided the grass before He created the cattle. And what a mercy that there were covenant supplies for God's people before they were in the world! He had given His Son Jesus Christ to die, to be the sponsor and surety of the elect, *before* Adam was made in the garden; long before sin came into the world, the everlasting mercy of God foresaw the damages of sin, and provided a refuge for every elect soul. Oh, what a mercy it is for me, that, before I hunger, God has prepared for my hunger; that before I thirst, God

has opened the rock in the wilderness to leap forth with crystal streams to satisfy the thirst of my soul! See what sovereign grace can do! Before the cattle come to the pasture, the grass is grown for them, and before I feel my need of divine mercy, that mercy is provided for me. Then I perceive *an illustration of free grace,* for wherever the ox comes into the field, he brings no money with him. There is the food ready for him, but he brings *nothing* with which to purchase it. So I, poor needy sinner, having nothing, come and receive Christ without money and without price. He makes the grass to grow for the cattle, and so He does provide grace for my needy soul, though I have now no money, no virtue, no excellence of my own. And why is it, my friends, why is it that God gives the cattle the grass? You will perhaps be surprised when I say to you that the reason is *because they belong to Him.* Here is a text to prove it. "The silver and the gold are Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." That is why He provides grass for them, because they are His own property. How is it that Christ is provided for God's people? Because "the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." Of every herd of cattle in the world, God could say, "They are Mine." Long before the rancher put his brand, God had set His creating mark upon it. They are God's making, preserving, and feeding altogether. So, before the stamp of Adam's fall was set upon our brow, the stamp of electing love was set there. "In Your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."

Another thing may, perhaps, surprise you still more; God feeds the cattle *because He has entered into a covenant with them to do so.* "What? A covenant with cattle!" says somebody. Yes! Truly so, for when God spoke to His servant Noah, in that day when all the cattle came out of the ark, we find Him saying, "I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of *the cattle,* and of every beast of the earth with you." So there was a covenant, you see, made with the cattle, and that covenant was that seedtime and harvest should not fail; therefore the earth brings forth for them, and the Lord causes the grass to grow. Does Jehovah keep His covenant with cattle, and will He not keep His covenant with His own beloved? Ah, it is because His chosen people are His covenanted ones in the person of the Lord Jesus that He provides for them all that they shall need in time and in eternity, and satisfies them out of the fullness of His everlasting love!

Once, again, God feeds the cattle, and then *the cattle praise Him.* We find David saying in the 148th Psalm, "Praise the Lord…you beasts and all cattle." They have their music for God. The Lord feeds His people in order that they may praise Him, to the end that their glory may sing praise unto Him and not be silent. While other creatures give glory to God, let the redeemed of the Lord especially say so, whom He has delivered out of the hand of the enemy.

Nor even yet is our text quite exhausted. Turning one moment from the cattle, I want you to notice the grass. It is said of the grass, *"He*

causes the grass to grow"—here is a mighty blow to free will, because, if the grass does not grow without God's causing it to grow, how is it that divine grace should be found in the human heart apart from divine operations? Surely grace is a much more wonderful product of divine wisdom, and more complicated than the grass can be! And if grace does not grow without a divine cause, depend upon it, grace does not dwell in us without a divine implantation; and if I have so much as one blade of grace growing within me, I must trace it all to God's divine will. As the grass all depends upon God's causing it to grow, so the divine grace we have depends upon God's constant kindness and tender loving mercy to make it ripen to perfection. You are a babe as yet in grace, and that you are alive unto God at all is due to God's quickening power; but if ever you are to attain to the stature of a perfect man or woman in Christ Jesus, that must be due to the continuous putting forth of the divine energy. There is no having grace, and no growing in grace, except God gives us both the one and the other—for if He causes grass to grow, much more must grace come from Him.

Again, if God thinks it worth His while to make grass, and take care of it, and make it grow; much more will He think it to His honor to cause His grace to grow in my heart. If the great Invisible Spirit, whose thoughts are high and lofty, condescends to look after that humble thing which grows by the hedge, surely He will condescend to watch over His own nature which He calls the incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever! Mungo Park, in the deserts of Africa, was much comforted when he took up a little piece of moss, and saw the wisdom and power of God in that lonely piece of loveliness. So when I introduce you today to the fields ripe and ready for the mower, how your hearts ought to leap for joy to see how God has produced the grass, caring for it all through the weary months of the long-delayed spring, and the rigorous cold of a suddenly perpetuated winter, until, at last He sent the genial rain and sunshine, and brought the fields to their proper condition. And so, my soul, though you may have many a frost and biting winter, and much to bear with, yet He causes the grass to grow, and He will cause you to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Once again, you perceive that the grass does not grow without an objective—the grass grows *for the cattle;* and then you know what the cattle grow for, they grow for man; so the whole business comes to a point. But, then, what does man grow for? That is the next question. Then, my soul, if there is any good thing growing in you, it is for a purpose; and you yourself, if you are favored with divine manifestation, are blessed for a purpose; and as the grass does not refuse to be fed upon by the cattle, take care that you do not refuse to yield yourself unto God; and, as the cattle do not refuse to give themselves up to labor and slaughter, so bow yourself, and render yourself to God, for God has an end in sparing and blessing you, and preserving you, and strewing your path with kindnesses. Take care that you do not miss this end, for to gain it will be your

happiness as well as God's glory. It should be your chief end on earth to serve Him, and to glorify Him forever above.

I draw to a close when I have noticed that *the existence of the grass is necessary to complete the chain of nature.* There would be no cattle if there were no grass; and no cattle, no something else—so the whole chain would go to pieces. So the meanest child of God is necessary to the family. They in heaven without us cannot be made perfect—the little ones are as necessary to God's family as the great ones; the Lord cannot, will not put you away from it, my desponding friends, because though you cannot see it, you are one stone in the building; and if you are taken away, what becomes of the next, and the next? Perhaps every heir of heaven is necessary to complete the purpose of God. I said "perhaps," but we know it to be so, for we are told by Paul that we are the fullness of Christ. The church is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all. Nature would be incomplete without the trembling grass blade, and the economy of divine grace would be incomplete without you, Mr. Fearing, and you, Mrs. Much-Afraid: you are necessary to complete the divine purpose, in order to let it be seen, world without end, that God is not defeated; that since Christ loved His own, He loved them to the end; that He could say, "Of all which He has given Me, I have lost nothing." Oh, how blessed it is to think of this! Since we are all thus necessary, if saved by grace, let us begin this morning to bless and to praise the God of providence and grace. While the grass serves God by beautifying the earth, and while the cattle take their turn also in the economy of creation, let each Christian say to himself, "Lord, what would You have me do?" And having found it, whatever our hand finds to do, let us do it with all our might! The Lord bless these remarks to you, and make them profitable to your souls, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 104.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED GOD
NO. 758

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 30, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT CAMDEN ROAD CHAPEL.

"According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust."
1 Timothy 1:11.

THIS verse occurs just after a long list of sins, which the apostle declares to be contrary to sound doctrine; from which we gather that one test of sound doctrine is its opposition to every form of sin. That doctrine which in any way palliates sin may be popular, but is not sound doctrine; those who talk much of their soundness, but yet by their lives betray the rottenness of their hearts, need far rather to be ashamed of their hypocrisy than to be proud of their orthodoxy. The apostle offers in the verse before us another standard by which to test the doctrines which we hear; he tells us that sound doctrine is always evangelical—"sound doctrine according to the glorious gospel." Any doctrine which sets up the will or the merit of man, any doctrine which exalts priest-craft and ceremonies, any doctrine, in fact, which does not put salvation upon the sole footing of free grace, is unsound. These two points are absolutely necessary in every teaching which professes to come from God; it must commend and foster holiness of life; and, at the same time, it must, beyond all question, be a declaration of divine grace and mercy through the Mediator.

Our apostle was, by the drift of his letter, led incidentally to make mention of the gospel; and then, in a moment, taking to himself wings of fire, he mounts into a transport of praise, and calls it "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." Such is generally his mode of writing that if he comes across a favorite thought, he is away at a tangent from the subject that he was aiming at, and does not return until his ardent spirit cools again. In this case, before he was aware, his soul made him like the chariots of Amminadab. His glowing heart poured forth the warmest eulogy upon that hidden treasure, that pearl of immense price, which he prized beyond all price, and guarded with a sacred jealousy of care. I think I see the radiant countenance of the apostle of the Lord, as with flashing eyes he dictates the words, "The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust."

Our subject affords us a fine ocean, but our time is short, our boat is small, and the atmosphere is so hot and heavy that scarcely a breath of air is to be had, and therefore I will keep to one straightforward track, and not distract you with many topics. To open up the text in all its length and breadth would be fit exercise for the loftiest intellect, but we must be content with a few experimental and practical remarks, and may the Lord enable us to weave them into a heart-searching discourse.

I. In the first place, then, Paul praises the gospel to the utmost by calling it "the glorious gospel of the blessed God."—HAVE WE EXPERIENCED ITS EXCELLENCE?

It is necessary to ask the question even in this congregation; for even to great multitudes who attend our houses of prayer, the gospel is a dry, uninteresting subject. They hear the word because it is their duty; they sit in the pew because custom requires an outward respect to religion; but they never dream of the gospel having anything glorious in it, anything that can stir the heart or make the pulse beat at a faster rate. The sermon is slow, the service is dull, the whole affair is weariness to which nothing but propriety makes men submit. Some people do their religion as a matter of necessity, as a horse drags a wagon; but if that necessity of respectability did not exist, they would be as glad to escape from it as the horse is to leave the shafts and to miss the rumbling of the wheels. It is necessary, then, to ask the question; and I shall put it before you in three or four ways. Paul calls the sacred message of mercy *the gospel.* Has it been the gospel to us? The word is plain, and I hardly need remind you that it means "good news." Now, has the gospel been "good news" to us? Has it ever been *"news"* to you? "We have heard it so often," says one, "that we cannot expect it to be news to us. We were trained by godly parents; we were taken to Sunday school; we have learned the gospel from our youth up; it cannot be news to us." Let me say to you, then, that you do not know the word of reconciliation unless it has been, and still is, news to you. To every man who is ever saved by the gospel, it comes as a piece of news as novel, fresh, and startling, as if he had never heard it before. The letter may be old, but the inward meaning is as new as though the ink were not yet dry in the pen of revelation. I confess to have been tutored in piety, put into my cradle by prayerful hands, and lulled to sleep by songs concerning Jesus; but after having heard the gospel continually, precept upon precept, here much and there much, yet when the word of the Lord came to me with His power, it was as new as if I had lived among the unvisited tribes of central Africa, and had never heard the tidings of the cleansing fountain filled with blood from the Savior's veins. The gospel in its Spirit and power always wears the dew of its youth; it glitters with morning's freshness—its strength and its glory abide forever. Ah, my dear hearer, if you have ever felt your guilt, if you have been burdened under a sense of it, if you have looked into your own heart to find some good thing, and been bitterly disappointed, if you have gone up and down through the world to try this and that scheme of getting relief, and found them all fail you like dry wells in the desert which mock the traveler, the gospel will be a sweet piece of news to your heart that there is here present salvation in the Savior. It is a most refreshing novelty to hear the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto Me and rest." Though you have heard the invitation outwardly thousands of times, yet Jesus' own voice, when He speaks to your heart, will be as surprisingly fresh to you as if these dumb walls should suddenly find a tongue, and reveal the mysteries which have been hidden from the foundation of the world. To every believer the gospel comes as news from the land beyond the river, God's mind revealed by God's Spirit to His chosen.

It is *good* news, too. Now, has the gospel ever been experimentally *good* to you, my hearer? Good in the best sense, good emphatically, good without any mixture of evil, the gospel is just that to those who know it—

is it so to you? Have you ever been deeply sensible of your overwhelming debt to the justice of God, and then gladly received the gracious information that your debts are all discharged? Have you trembled beneath the thunder-charged cloud of Jehovah's wrath, which was ready to pour forth its tempest upon you, and have you heard the gentle voice of mercy saying, "I have blotted out, as a cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins"? Have you ever known what it is to be fully absolved, to stand before God without fear, accepted in the beloved, received as a dear child, covered with the Righteousness of Christ? If so, the gospel has been *"good"* indeed to you. Grasping it by the hand of faith, and feeling the power of it in your soul, you count it to be the best tidings that ever came from God to man.

I shall now ask you earnestly to answer my question as in the sight of God; let no man escape from this most vital inquiry, Has that which Paul calls the gospel, proved itself to be gospel to you? Did it ever make your heart leap, just as some highly gratifying information excites and charms you? Has it ever seemed to you an all-important thing? If not, you know not what the gospel means. O let my anxious questions tenderly quicken you to be concerned about your soul's affairs, and to seek unto the Lord Jesus for eternal life.

Paul, having called the message of mercy "the gospel," then adds an adjective—*"the glorious gospel,"* and a glorious gospel it is for a thousand reasons: glorious in its antiquity; for before the beams of the first morning drove away primeval shades, this gospel of our salvation was ordained in the mind of the eternal. It is glorious because it is everlasting—when all things shall have passed away as the hoarfrost of the morning dissolves before the rising sun, this gospel shall still exist in all its power and grace. It is glorious because it reveals the glory of God more fully than the entire universe beside. Not all the innumerable worlds that God has ever fashioned, though they speak to us in loftiest eloquence from their celestial spheres, can proclaim to us the character of our heavenly Father as the gospel does. "The heavens are telling the glory of God," but the gospel which tells of *Jesus* has a sweeter and a clearer speech. The poet talks of the great and wide sea where the almighty form mirrors itself in tempest; so, indeed, the finger of God may mirror itself, but a thousand oceans could not mirror the infinite Himself—the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only molten looking glass in which Jehovah can be seen. In Jesus we see not only God's train, such as Moses saw when he beheld the skirts of Jehovah's robe in the cleft of the rock, but the whole of God is revealed in the gospel of Jesus, so that our Lord could say, "He who has seen Me, has seen the Father." If the Lord is glorious in holiness, the gospel reveals Him. Is His right hand glorious in power? So the gospel speaks of Him. Is the Lord the God of love? Is not this the genius of the gospel? The gospel is glorious because every attribute of Deity is manifested in it with unrivalled splendor.

But I desire to come home to your consciences by asking, Is the gospel *to you a glorious gospel?* Beloved friends, we may know our state very much by what answer we shall give to that question. The gospel, seen with these eyes and heard with these external ears, will be like the Lord Himself, "A root out of a dry ground, having no form, nor comeliness," but the gospel understood by the renewed heart, will be quite a different thing. Oh, it will be a glorious gospel indeed, if you are raised up in new-

ness of life, to enjoy the blessings which it brings to you. So, I beseech you, answer the question: and to help you, let me remind the people of God how glorious the gospel has been to them. Do you remember the day when the gospel carried your heart by storm? Can you ever forget when the great battering ram of the truth of God began to beat against the gates of Mansoul? Do you remember how you strengthened the posts and bars, and stood out against the gospel, resolving not to yield? You were at times compelled to weep under impressions, but you wiped away your transient tears—your emotion was "as the morning cloud, and as the early dew." But eternal love would not relinquish its gracious assaults, for it was determined to save. Providence and grace together besieged the city of your soul, and brought divine Artillery to bear upon it. You were straightaway shut up till—as it was with Samaria, so it was with you—there was a great famine in your soul. Do you remember how, Sunday after Sunday every sermon was a fresh assault from the hosts of heaven—a new blow from the celestial battering ram? How often, when the gates of your prejudice were dashed to shivers, did you set up fresh barricades! Your heart trembled beneath the terrible strokes of justice, but, by the help of Satan, your depraved heart managed to secure the gates a little longer with iron clamps of pride, and bronze bars of insensibility; till at last, one blessed day—do you remember it?—one blessed day, the gospel battering ram gave the effectual blow of divine grace, the gates flew wide open, and in rode the Prince of Peace, Immanuel, like a conqueror, riding in the chariots of salvation! Our will was subdued, our affections were overcome, our whole soul was brought into subjection to the sway of mercy. Jesus was glorious in our eyes that day, "the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." That day of days we have registered upon the tablets of our heart: it was the true coronation day of Jesus in us, and our birthday for eternity! When our glorious Lord entered into our souls wearing His vesture dipped in blood, pardoning and blessing in the plenitude of His grace, then the bells of our heart rang merry peals; the streamers of our joy floated in the fragrant air; the streets of our soul were strewn with roses; the fountains of our love ran with rich red wine, and our soul was as full of bliss as a heart could be this side of heaven; for salvation had come to our house, and mercy's King had deigned to visit us. Oh, the sweet perfume of the spikenard, when, for the first time, the King sat at our table to sup with us! How the savor of His presence filled every chamber of our inner man! That day when grace redeemed us from our fears, the gospel was a glorious gospel indeed! Ah, dear hearer, you stood in the crowded aisle to hear the sermon, but you did not grow weary, the lips of the preacher refreshed you, for the truth of God dropped like sweet smelling myrrh! You could have gone over hedge and ditch to hear the gospel at that season of first love; no matter how roughly it might have been served up by the preacher, you rolled the bread of heaven under your tongue as a sweet morsel, for it was the gospel of your salvation!

Christian, I will refresh your memory further. Do not forget the later conquests of that gospel. If you have made any advance in the divine life, it has been by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ applied by the Holy Spirit. We make mistakes sometimes, for, having begun in the Spirit we hope to be made perfect in the flesh. I mean that frequently we try to battle with our inbred sins by smiting them with legal reasoning. No believer

ever conquered sin by being afraid of the punishment of it—this is a weapon fit only for sons of the bondwoman. It is the blood of Jesus which is the conquering weapon in the holy war against natural corruption. "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb." Knowing that I am dead to sin and risen with Christ, it is in the power of resurrection life that I wrestle against the old man, and overcome him. beloved, remember that you are always weak when you get away from the cross, that it is only as a sinner saved by blood that you can hope to make any advance in sanctification. Do not attempt to flog yourself into divine grace; the new life must not be touched with the whip of bondage. Go to the cross for motive and energy as to holiness. Look to Jesus in the gospel as you did in the beginning of your *new* life. Know yourself to be saved in Him, and then go forth to battle temptation with the gospel as the standard of your lifelong warfare. If any of you have tried to make war with sin apart from the Captain of your salvation, you have either been wounded to your hurt already, or you will be; but if Judah's Lion shall go up before you, and you follow with the gospel as your war cry, your victory is sure, and you shall have another wreath to lay at the feet of Jesus and His glorious gospel.

Beloved, let me say that all true saints have found it to be a glorious gospel from its comforting us in our darkest hours. We are not without our troubles, for which we should be grateful; they are flinty rocks which flow with oil. The roots of our soul might take too firm a hold upon this poor clay soil if they were not toughened by affliction; this is not our rest, it is polluted, and our sorrows are useful because they remind us of this. But what has such power to calm the troubled spirit as the gospel? Go to the Lord Jesus, you daughters of grief; know and understand once more your union with Him, and your acceptance in Him, and you will repine no more: you will bow your shoulder and cheerfully take up your cross when you have found out in your hour of need that the gospel has a glorious power to sustain those who are ready to sink.

Did you ever perceive the glory of the gospel in its power to resist the attacks of the great enemy? The soul has been beleaguered by a thousand temptations; Satan has howled, and all the fiends of hell have joined in horrible chorus, and your own poor distracted thoughts have said, "I shall perish notwithstanding all my high enjoyments and confidence." Have you never gathered, as John Bunyan would picture it, all your forces to the top of the wall to sling the great stones against the enemy? Have you not felt that the castle would be taken, till, as a last resort, you ran up the blood-red flag of the cross, seized the Sword of the Spirit, and went to the rampart determined to hold the wall against the enemy? Then when the scaling ladder touched the wall, and the foe leaped on the bulwarks, you dashed him down again in the name of Jesus by the power of the cross, and as often as he came up, so often did you hurl him down again, always overcoming in the power of the gospel; keeping your ground against temptation from without, and corruption from within, by the energy which the gospel of Jesus Christ alone could give you.

One point may help us to see the glory of the gospel, namely, that it has saved us from tremendous ills. The ills which are to come upon the unbeliever, who shall describe them? If a spirit could cross the bridgeless gulf which parts us from the land of darkness and the shadow of death, if he could tell us what are the unutterable pangs which are endured by

guilty souls, then might we say, "Glorious indeed is that gospel which can lift us from the gates of hell, and preserve us from going down to the pit." Think, my brothers and sisters, of what the joys are for which the gospel is preparing us! It is by the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the word, that we are ripening for those joys which "eye has not seen," and which "ear has not heard." Meetness for heaven will not come to us by the law, but by the gospel. Not so much as one of the celestials came there by the deeds of the flesh, but altogether by the sovereign grace of God revealed to them in the gospel of Jesus Christ. A glorious gospel it is, for it brings its disciples to glory!

Let me ask you whether it is glorious to you at this hour? I think I can say it is to me. I wish it were in my power to make it more glorious in my ministry, but it is glorious to my own heart. After some years of experience; the Christian comes to know better than he did at first how much the gospel suits him. He finds that its simplicity suits his bewilderment; its grace suits his sinfulness; its power is suitable to his weakness; its comfort is suitable to his despondency; and the older he grows the more he loves the gospel of the grace of God. Give it up? Ah, never! We will hold Christ the more firmly because men despise Him. To whom or where should we go if we should turn aside from our Lord Jesus?

Now, dear hearers, before I leave this point, I want to put it to you again with much loving solicitude. Is the gospel glorious to you? Remember, if it is not, there can be no hope for you. There is no way of salvation except by the good news that, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and if that news should sound in your ears as a dry, dull thing, rest assured you are not on the way to heaven, for the gospel to every saved soul is sweeter than the sound of the best earthly music. Is it so to you? God is pleased today to put up before your eyes the white flag of mercy, calling you to come to Jesus and live. But remember, if you do not yield to it, He will run up the red flag of threatening, and then the black flag of execution will not be far off. Perhaps some of you have been suffering under bodily disease, take that as a warning. When our vessels of war would stop a suspicious vessel, they fire a shot over her bow as a warning. If she does not haul to, perhaps they give another, and if no notice is taken of this, the gunners go to their business in real earnest, and woe to the offender! Your affliction is the gospel's warning gun. Pause awhile, I beseech you; ask the Lord in mercy to look upon you that you may be saved! As I think upon some of you here who are not saved, I feel something like the boy I read of yesterday in the newspapers. Last week there were two lads on the great rocks of Lundy Island, in the Bristol Channel, looking for seagull eggs; one of them went far down the cliff, and lost his footing, and when his brother, hearing a faint voice, looked down, he saw him clinging to a jutting crag, and striving in vain to find a place for his feet. There stood the anxious brother, alarmed and paralyzed with dread, quite unable to help the younger one in so much peril below, who soon relaxed his hold and was dashed to pieces far beneath. I feel somewhat like that alarmed brother, only there is this happy difference—I *can* hope for you, and bid you hope for yourselves. You are clinging now, perhaps, to some false hope, and striving to find a rest where rest is not to be found; but the strong-winged Angel of the everlasting gospel is just underneath you this morning, crying, "Drop now; simply drop into My arms; I will take you and bear you aloft in safety." That an-

gel is the Angel of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ! You will be dashed to pieces forever unless you rest in Him; but cast yourself upon Him, I pray you, and then, as you are carried in safety far off from every fear, you will magnify the grace of God, and extol the glorious gospel.

I must leave that point, and observe that Paul recognized the gospel as being the *gospel of God.* Here arises another inquiry by which we may know whether we are saved or not. Has the gospel been the gospel of God to you, my friends? It is easy to receive the gospel as the gospel of "my minister." I am afraid there is a good deal of that sort of thing among us. We have great faith in our religious teachers, and very properly so, if we have received benefit from them; but if the gospel only comes to us as the gospel of such-and-such a preacher, it will not save us; it must come distinctly and directly as *God's* gospel, and we must receive it as such. It is in solemn silence of the mind our privilege to hear the voice of God speaking to us and to receive the truth of God in the love of it as coming with divine authority directly from God. Remember that all religion which is not the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart will have to be unraveled, let it be woven ever so cunningly. We may build, as our little children do on the seashore, our sand houses, and we may pile them up very quickly too, and we may be very pleased with them—but they will all come down as the tide of time advances; only that which God the Holy Spirit builds upon the foundation of Christ's finished work will stand the test of time and eternity. How is it with you? If the Spirit of Christ is not in you, you are dead. If the gospel itself should come to you in a sort of power, but only because of the pathos of the preacher, or the eloquent manner of his speech, it has not brought eternal life to you.

If the gospel is indeed the gospel of God to us, it will exalt God in our estimation. The Father we shall love and adore, having chosen us to eternal life. The Son we shall love with warmest affection, having redeemed us with His precious blood. The Holy Spirit we shall constantly reverence, and we shall cherish Him as dwelling a welcome guest within these bodies of ours. By this we may tell whether we have received the truth of God, by its bringing us consciously into connection with God. Does God dwell in you, my hearer? If not, you will not dwell where God is. You must know the Holy Spirit, not as an influence to be poured out as some pray, but as *dwelling within you*, resting in your *heart*. I put that as a very important question, but I will not pause over it, for I have to close our first head by noticing that the gospel was to Paul the *"gospel of the blessed God."* I believe William Knibb used to read this passage, "The gospel of the happy God," and it was not a mistake—it is the very gist of the matter. "The gospel of the happy God." Have you ever considered how happy God must be? How supremely happy? No care, no sorrow can ever pass across His Infinite Mind. He is serenely blessed evermore. Now, when a man is miserable, and of a miserable turn of mind, he as naturally makes people miserable as a foul fountain pours out foul water; but when a good man is superlatively happy, he imparts happiness. A happy face attracts many of us, and a happy temperament, a quiet mind, a serene disposition, why, a man who has these inevitably tries to make others happy; and it is, I suppose, because God is infinitely happy, that He delights in the happiness of His creatures. The fabled gods of the heathen were vexed with all sorts of ambitions, longings, and cravings, which they could not gratify, or which, when gratified, only made them

crave more, consequently they are pictured as revengeful and cruel, delighting in the miseries of men; but our God is so perfectly blessed that He has no motive for causing needless sorrow to His creatures. He has all perfection within Himself; and, consequently, He delights to make us happy.

How much satisfaction does God find in the happiness of creatures that are devoid of intellect? You may have seen sometimes when the sea is going down, a little fringe at the edge of the wave which looks like mist; but if you were to examine it carefully, you would find that there were countless multitudes of very tiny shrimp, all leaping up and casting themselves into all manner of forms of intense delight. Look again at the gnats, as you walk in your gardens in the summer's evenings—how they dance up and down—these little mirthful beings are all exhibiting to us the perfect blessedness that God would have to be manifested by *all* His creatures. He would have His people supremely blessed, He would have every vessel of mercy full to the brim with the oil of joy; and the way to make us so is to give us the gospel. The gospel is sent, to use our Savior's words, "that His joy may be in us, and that our joy may be full." We enjoy heaven upon earth as we sit at the feast of fat things on earth—what will be our glory when the gospel of the blessed God shall have turned out all our sin; when we shall swim in the gospel as the fish swims in the sea; when the gospel shall become our element in the next world. Oh, the happiness of the creatures who are full of the gospel spirit before the throne of God! Dear hearer, did the gospel ever come to you in that shape? I am afraid that to most people the gospel is a bondage because they do not know it in very deed. I am afraid that to many, gospel emotion is a sort of spasm; they are satisfied with the truth of God sometimes, but at other times, when they feel they must have a treat, they go into the world for it. Where you get your treats there your heart is; whatever it is that gives you the most happiness, that is the master of your spirit. The Christian feels that he can sing with old Mason—

"I need not go abroad for joys, I have a feast at home;
My sighs are tamed into songs, my heart has ceased to roam.
Down from above the blessed Dove is come into my breast,
To witness God's eternal love, and give my spirit rest.
My God, I'll praise You while I live, and praise You when I die;
And praise You when I rise again, and to eternity."

The religion of the genuine Christian is calculated to impart perfect delight; the truly regenerated man desires to have more and more of it so that his soul may be baptized in heavenly joy.

"The gospel of the happy God," also means the gospel of the God whom we must bless in return. As being happy, He makes us happy; so we, being happy, desire to ascribe to Him all the glory of our happiness. Now, is the gospel to you, my dear young friend over there, the gospel of a God whom you bless with all your heart because He has sent it to you, and made you willing to receive it? If so, you are saved. But if now no emotions of sincere gratitude stir the depths of your soul, then the gospel has been to you no more than a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

II. The apostle says, "The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which is committed to my trust." DO YOU RECOGNIZE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY?

Paul speaks not here of himself alone; he might have said, "Which is committed to the trust of every believer in Christ." The gospel is a price-

less treasure, and the believers are the bankers of it. It is committed to our trust as men commit business to their agents.

First, we are bound *to believe it all*. Take heed of receiving a divided and maimed gospel. It has been said that "only half the truth is a lie" and so it is. Most of the ill reports which distress the world have truth at the foundation of them, but they become false through the exaggeration of one part, and the omission of the next. It should be the duty of every enlightened Christian to labor to master the whole compass of truth so far as possible. I suppose none but the infinite mind can know all the lengths and breadths of the truth of God, but still we should not be warped by education, nor be kept from receiving it by prejudice. We should strive against all partiality, and it should be, whenever we open this Book, one of our prayers, "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law." We must pray to have a mind like molten metal, ready to be run into the mold of the truth; to have a soul like the photographer's sensitive plate, ready to receive the light-writing of God at once, so that His truth may be there in its entirety; to be willing to give up the most cherished dogma, the most flesh-pleasing form of teaching, when we find it to be contrary to Scripture. To sit at Jesus' feet and learn of Him, is the life-business of the Christian in this house of his pilgrimage. The gospel is in this sense, committed to our trust, for we are to lay it up in our hearts. But someone demands, "How am I to know which is the gospel?" You may know it by searching the Scriptures. "But one sect says this, and another sect says the opposite." What have you to do with the sects? Read the Book of God for yourself! "But some men do read it and arrive at one opinion, and some maintain the opposite, and thus they contradict themselves, and yet are equally right." Who told you that? That is impossible! Men cannot be equally right when they contradict each other! There is the truth of God and there is a falsehood; if *yes* is true, *no* is false. It may be true that good men have held different opinions, but are you responsible for what they may have held, or are you to gather that because they were personally good, therefore everything they believed was true? No, but this Book is plain enough; it is no nose of wax that everybody may shape to what form he likes. There is something taught here plainly and positively, and if a man will but give his mind to it, by God's grace he may find it out. I do not believe that this Book is so dark and mysterious as some suppose or, if it were, the Holy Spirit who wrote it still lives, and the author always knows His own meaning—you have only to go to Him in prayer, and He will tell you what it means. *You* will not become infallible, I trust you will not think yourself to be so, but you will learn doctrines which are *infallibly true,* and upon which you may put down your foot and say, "Now I know this, and am not to be duped out of it." It is a grand thing to have the truth of God burnt into you, as with a hot iron, so that there is no getting it out of you.

The priest, when he took away the Testament from the boy, thought he had done the work. "But," said the boy, "Sir, what will you do with the 26 chapters which I learned by heart? You cannot take them away." Yet memory might fail, and, as the lad grew into an old man, he might forget the 26 chapters; but suppose they changed his *heart,* and made him a new creature in Christ—there would be no getting *that* away, even though Satan himself should attempt the task! Seek to carry out the sacred trust committed to you by believing it, and believing it *all!* Search

the word to find out what the gospel is, and endeavor to receive it into your inmost heart that it may be in your heart's core forever.

Next, as good stewards we must *maintain the cause of truth* against all comers. "Never get into religious controversies," says one; that is to say, being interpreted, be a Christian soldier, but let your sword rust in its scabbard, and sneak into heaven like a coward. Such advice I cannot endorse. If God has called you by His truth, maintain the truth which has been the means of your salvation. We are not to be pugnacious, always contending for every notion of our own; but where we have learned the truth of the Holy Spirit, we are not tamely to see that standard torn down which our fathers upheld at peril of their blood. This is an age in which the truth of God must be maintained zealously, vehemently, continually. Playing fast and loose as many do, believing *this* today and *that* tomorrow, is the sure mark of children of wrath; but having received the truth, to hold fast to the very form of it, as Paul bids Timothy to do, is one of the duties of heirs of heaven. Stand fast for truth, and may God give the victory to the faithful.

We must believe the gospel and maintain it, for it is committed to our trust. It seems to me, however, that the most of us may best fulfill our responsibility to the gospel by *adorning it* in our lives. Men give jewels to those whom they love; and so, if we love the gospel, let our virtues be the jewels which shall display our love. A servant girl may adorn the gospel. She goes to a place of worship, and perhaps her irreligious mistress may object to her going. I remember Mr. Jay telling a story of such a case, where the master and mistress had forbidden the girl to attend a Dissenting place of worship. She pleaded very hard, and at last determined to leave the house. The master said to his wife, "Well, you see our servant is a very excellent servant; we never had such an industrious girl as she is. Everything in the house is kept so orderly, and she is so obedient, and so on. Now, she does not interfere with our consciences, it is a pity we should interfere with hers. Wherever she goes, it certainly does her no harm—why not let her go?" In the next conversation the wife said, "I really think, husband that our servant gets so much good where she goes, that we had better go and hear for ourselves." And they were soon members of the very same Church which they had thought so lightly of at the first! Now we can each of us in our station and do that. We are not all called to preach in these boxes called pulpits, but we may preach more conveniently and much more powerfully behind the counter or in the drawing room, or in the parlor, or in the field, or wherever else providence may have placed us. Let us endeavor to make men mark what kind of gospel we believe.

Only a few weeks ago a missionary in China took his gun to go up one of the rivers of the interior to shoot wild ducks; and as he went along in the boat he shot at some ducks, and down they fell; unfortunately they did not happen to be wild fowl, but tame ducks belonging to some of the neighbors. The owner was miles away, but the boat was drawn up to the side of the river, and the missionary went about carefully endeavoring to find out the owner of the ducks, for he could not rest until he had paid for the damage he had ignorantly done. The owner was much surprised; he had been so accustomed to having people shoot his ducks and never saying a word about it, that he could not understand the honesty of the man of God, and he told others, until crowds of Chinese gathered round

and stared at the missionary as if he had dropped from the moon; a man so extremely honest as not to be willing to take away ducks when he had killed them! They listened to the gospel with attention, and observed that the teaching must be good which made people as conscientious as the missionary had been. I should not wonder but what that little incident did more for the gospel than the preaching of 20 sermons might have done without it. So let it be with us; let us so act in every position that we shall adorn the gospel which is committed to our trust.

Lastly, it is committed to our trust if we have received it that we may *spread it*—spread it personally by telling it abroad. If more could preach the gospel it would be well. We have in all our congregations young men who are hard at work—at this very moment I do not doubt but what we have a hundred preaching in the street—perhaps more; but I have sometimes regretted that so few of the wealthier men enter into such labor. We wish to see the men of ten talents preaching—the men of large abilities consecrating themselves to Christ. Many of our young members are more useful at literary institutions than in the Church. Other useful occupations are all very well in their way, but I wish we could get the strength of our men spent more in the preaching of the gospel. The first business of a Christian is his Christianity, all the rest, even his patriotism, must be kept subservient to that, for heaven is more his country than England is, and Jesus Christ is rather his King than any of the kings of earth! "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." I would ask young men now present who love the Lord, whether they really are doing for the cause of God what they ought to do? Whether they could not do something more by way of making manifest in every place the savor of Jesus Christ's name? My sisters, your voices are exceedingly sweet, but we like to hear them better anywhere than from a pulpit; but still you have your sphere—do you occupy it for Christ? The Christian woman's first call is to serve Jesus in the family; next to that to serve Christ in her neighborhood. Are you doing so? The "glorious gospel of the blessed God" is as much committed to your trust, Christian woman, as if there were not another Christian under heaven—how would it fare if it were so? If all other Christians died, would you have done by the gospel what it might demand of you? All the zeal and industry of 10,000 others cannot touch your personal responsibility as a Christian!

I have to ask you, this morning, to help me to spread the glorious gospel. Some years ago, having done my utmost to preach the word with my own mouth, I found that running up and down throughout the country preaching 10 or 12 times a week, I was still able to do but very little. I thought if I found other tongues, and set them talking, found other brains and set them thinking, I might, perhaps, do more for the cause of my blessed Master. One young man thrown in my way who was educated for the Christian ministry for me by an esteemed brother; and when he was greatly acknowledged of God as preacher, the desire to assist students grew within my heart, and that one young man gave place to ten, twenty, thirty, then fifty, then ninety, as at the present. The Pastor's College, for which I ask your contributions this morning, has grown to be a power for good. We have had for some successive years between 80 and 90 brothers in training for the ministry. The whole of the support for them is found by the gifts of God's people which they voluntarily send, without being waited upon by any collector, or asked for annual sub-

scriptions. I have nothing to depend upon but the providence of God which directs the generosity of His people. Sometimes my funds run rather short, but never so short that I am really in need, for when the treasury is scantily furnished, we call the young men together and pray about it, and many a time we have had as distinct answers to prayer as though God had stretched his hand out of heaven to give the needed money. Some 5,000 pounds a year are spent in this way, which God always sends when it is needed. We have built several places of worship; we have formed and founded several fresh churches; we have evangelized the darkest districts of London and the country—and our men are now to be found in Australia, on the rock of St. Helena, in Southern Africa, in America, and all quarters of the earth. God has been pleased to bless them, and has given them souls for their hire, and we shall be glad if you feel moved to give towards their maintenance.

Before I dismiss you, I would like to press home to each one the question, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Has the gospel become a glorious gospel to you?" I do not know you as I know my own people, but when I look along my galleries I mourn over those who have been hearing the word 10 years, and are the same as if they never heard it. I suppose there are some of you in the same case, and my esteemed brother, Mr. Tucker, must cast his eye around the gallery, and the area, and see many who have grown gospel-hardened. It is a horrible thing to think of! The same sun that melts wax hardens clay, and to some hearts the gospel becomes the savor of death unto death. If nothing comes of this morning's service but making everyone inquire how it is with his own soul; if it shall only compel you to go to your solitary chamber, and shut the door and pray, "O Lord, let me *know* this glorious gospel; I have not understood it up till now, for it has not been glorious to me. Do make it so to me this day, that I may be saved," my heart will be very glad if such shall be the case.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 TIMOTHY 1.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

JESUS PUTTING AWAY SIN
NO. 759

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 7, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"...now once in the end of the age has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."
Hebrews 9:26.

WHEN the conscience is unenlightened and the heart is rebellious, man is divided from his God by a false sense of personal righteousness. He imagines that God deals harshly with him, that He looks upon his sin in too severe a light, and that although He may be offended, yet, in some other respects, he has a claim upon the consideration of his Maker. As soon, however, as the Spirit of God illuminates the understanding, this self-righteousness disappears: It is a flimsy cobweb which the broom of the law soon sweeps away; it is no more substantial than the mist of the morning and it is at once dissipated by the rising sun of divine grace. Then man feels himself divided from his God by another and more real barrier: he has given up his self-righteousness, but now he is painfully conscious of his sinfulness, which appears to him to be an impassable gulf, separating him forever from the just and holy God. The more the conscience becomes quickened, and the more fully the understanding is enlightened, the more desponding does the man become as to any hope of his ever becoming acceptable to the Most High. He puts himself into God's position; his enlightened understanding enables him to look upon sin in some degree as God would regard it, and he is horrified to think that he should have been so ungrateful to so kind a Father; he is ashamed that he should have broken laws so perfectly just, and he is altogether out of heart with himself for having done despite to a government every way so generous and righteous as the moral government of God. The awakened sinner says within himself, "I can never make recompense for the injury which I have done to God's honor; it is not possible that anything I do or suffer may compensate for my continued rebellion and obstinacy; even if I could cease from sin in the future, yet I cannot hope to meet my God with peaceful mind when I remember the unhallowed and disgraceful past." And thus the very enlightenment of conscience, which is one of the best signs of hope in quickened sinners, causes in him a consciousness of sin which becomes to him the ground of self-despair.

I have no doubt I have some such in this congregation. Even among you who have believed in Jesus there may be some such; for every now and then when we go back to first principles, we get again a distressingly vivid sight of sin, and need once more to understand how God can be just and yet the justifier of him who believes. Brothers and sisters, if you are now desirous to be at one with God; if your spirit longs for His embrace, and yet you feel as if you could not come to God by reason of the sin which troubles you, it will be a great joy to you to know that eternal

wisdom has devised a plan, and carried it out too, for the effectually putting away of sin. This is a wonder of wonders which will create forever enthusiastic gratitude among celestial spirits. Eternity shall not diminish the amazement of our minds at the thought that the impenetrable partition wall of our sin has been broken down, and the awful veil of thick darkness which shut us out from the mercy seat has been forever removed. Belshazzar's knees knocked together, and the joints of his loins were loosened, when he saw the handwriting on the wall which declared his condemnation. What joy would have filled his despairing spirit, if suddenly that writing had been blotted out, and another hand had written "I have loved you with an everlasting love!" Can you conceive the joy of that astonished monarch, the transport of that frightened throng? Yet this morning I have as good news to tell to the penitent as though such were their position, and such the act of pardoning mercy. Jesus has blotted out the handwriting which was against us, and written words of love concerning us. The angel of wrath once stood over Jerusalem, having a drawn sword in his hand, but Jehovah has put away the sin of His people, and now the avenging sword is returned to the scabbard, and God regards His Zion with everlasting love.

I have said that this is a wonder, and so it is, when you recollect that the angels fell. The sons of the morning kept not their first estate, but for fallen angels, there is no putting away of sin. Shut up forever, chained with adamantine bands, their sufferings shall know no pause, their anguish shall find no end; and yet *we,* creatures of inferior mold, we have enlisted the sympathy of the ever blessed who undertook to make atonement for our sin, and has achieved the purpose of His grace. Beloved, it might have been easy enough for God to have put away human sin itself by the destruction of our race. It would no more need an effort of power on God's part to destroy us, than for us to tread upon a moth—no, His mere *Will* could have done it; and I do not know that one of the crowns of His glory would have lost a jewel. He might instantly have created another race superior to ourselves if so it had pleased Him, and every gap which the destruction of mankind might have caused in the universe might have been at once filled up; but, wonder of wonders, He spares us at a vast expense—He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all! It has sometimes been asked why God did not pardon sin without atonement. That is a question which we must leave those to answer who propound it. We do not doubt but what God might have done so if so He had willed—we doubt whether He ever would have willed to do so, for our view of the constitution of His glorious character seems to require that sin should be punished—but that is not a question for us—*we know* that the Lord has not willed to let sin escape. He has been pleased to make the display of His grace to sinners an opportunity for the revelation of all His other attributes, that—

"God, in the person of His Son,
Has all His mightiest works outdone."

Without raising questions which would minister no profit to us, it is ours to behold the great love which the Lord has loved us, in that He sent His Son to redeem us from our iniquities, by the shedding of His own most precious blood—

"Oh, fathomless abyss,
Where hidden mysteries lie:

The seraph finds his bliss,
Within the same to pry;
Lord, what is man, Your desperate foe,
That You should bless and love him so?"

I propose, this morning, as God may help me, to comfort those who are longing for reconciliation with God by showing them that no difficulties exist, since Jesus Christ has forever put away the sin which would have separated a penitent soul from its God. We shall look at the text carefully, and I think we shall notice in it several things which minister comfort to seeking sinners. Jesus Christ has appeared once, in the end of the age, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

I. Let us consider, first, THE TIME OF THIS GREAT PUTTING AWAY OF SIN, in the end of the world, or the age—"in these last days"—as one of the apostles words it.

Why was that time selected? Was it not in order *to exercise the faith of ancient saints,* who, like Abraham, saw Christ's day in vision—saw Him and were glad? They were denied the great privilege which we possess. Prophets and kings desired it long, but died without the sight. Nevertheless, above the mausoleum of ancient saints we read this inscription, "These all died in faith." They rested in confidence in the Messiah who was to come, and their faith received its reward. Did not God place the putting away of sin at the close of the age, in order *to glorify His Son*, by letting us see that the very anticipation of His death was sufficient for the salvation of men? Before Peter touched the sick, we find that his shadow had a healing efficacy, and so, before Jesus literally took upon Himself our flesh, we find that the shadow of His advent saved the chosen sons of men. Long before the sun has risen in these summer mornings, the twilight begins; before his wheel has touched the horizon, his refracted light banishes the darkness; and so, before the Savior actually came, there was a blessed twilight of gospel grace, in the light of which, patriarchs found their way to Jerusalem. Let us glorify the blood of Jesus, which in God's decree was shed from before the foundations of the world; let us magnify the divine sacrifice which, before it was led to the slaughter, was capable of redeeming from death and hell unnumbered thousands of God's elect.

Was not this sacrifice placed at the end of the world to be, as it were, *the crown of all Jehovah's works?* I see before me a stupendous pyramid, the base of it is exceedingly broad: it is the inanimate creation. Stars unnumbered lie close together at its base, like the sands of the Libyan desert; ponderous masses of matter underlie the whole amazing structure, all radiant with the glory of God, with a light like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Measureless fields of space, and all but infinite leagues of matter, form the grosser basis of the pyramid which now rises before my astonished vision. Overlying this, as though it were a layer of malachite or emerald veined with blue, and scarlet, and vermillion, I see the vegetable creation with all its beauty of form and splendor of color, cedar and hyssop, olive and lily, oak and bramble. No art of man, or polished jewels of the mine, can rival its magnificence. Over these, sparkling like the stone which was full of eyes, I see the animal kingdom with its mingled varieties of symmetry and strength, energy and vitality. Here on high the pyramid is narrower, but its light is far more excellent, for the likeness of the living creatures sparkle and flash

like burning coals of fire, with an energy unseen in the broader foundations which are placed beneath. Beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl, all magnify the master builder who has ordained for them their place in the pyramid of His manifested glory. Higher still I see man, who is made to have dominion over all the lower works of God—man, of whom it is written, "You have been in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold."

Above these, I see men twice made, the regenerated men, the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, the peculiar portion and crown jewels of Jehovah: but can my eyes endure to gaze upon the glowing brightness which forms the apex of the glittering pyramid? I look, and lo, above the firmament, higher than the heaven of heaven, I see the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon the throne there sits the Son of Man in all the brightness of His Father's glory, encircled with a rainbow like unto an emerald, and hymned by innumerable spirits in strains like these: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created." O my soul, are you not overwhelmed with the vision of man upon the throne of God, man most true and manlike, born of a virgin, the woman's promised seed, and yet God over all, blessed forever! When that pyramid was crowned with such a matchless Topstone, well might the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy; well might there be from men and angels joyous shouts of "grace! Grace unto it!" The great Master of the feast has kept the best wine until now. Richest and rarest of the wines on the lees, well refined, is that which was shed on Calvary by the soldier's spear. Rich was the store which the glorious Monarch of the ages placed upon the table of His benevolence; but in these last days He brings out the choicest of His dainties, the bread of heaven, the wine which makes glad the heart of God and man. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

The practical point I drive at in referring to the period of our Lord's sacrifice is just this—you and I live in a period when the putting away of sin has been perfectly accomplished. Beloved, sin *is* put away. We have not to exercise the faith of a Noah, or an Isaac, or a David, in looking forward to the expiation as a blessing yet to come, but the testimony of the Holy Spirit is that Jesus has once and for all finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Jesus has been led like a lamb to the slaughter: the Passover is slain, the propitiation is made. It is a recorded fact; it is a fact that never can be blotted from the annals of time, that redemption is finished. Sin is put away by the one great sacrifice, and we may come to God, who is reconciled through the death of His Son.

May I press this upon those of you who would come to God, but are afraid? Come back, poor prodigal, the heart of God towards you is that of a loving Father; you need not fear. Come back, you wanderer, however far you may have gone—

"Sprinkled now with blood the throne,
Why beneath your burdens groan?

On My pierced body laid,
Justice acknowledges the ransom paid.
Bow the knee, and kiss the Son;
Come and welcome, sinner, come."

If, in the earliest ages, you had come in the faith that this atonement would be offered, you would have been accepted, but how can you linger when the atonement is already presented? Once, in the end of the ages, the work of divine grace has been done. You have not to wait until the bridge spans the gulf; you have not to inquire who shall roll away the stone, for, behold, One greater than an angel has descended and rolled away the stone from heaven's gate, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. There are no barriers now between a seeking soul and God, except such as unbelief shall set up. I pray you build no barricades to exclude yourself from happiness. Christ has dashed down all the partition walls that your sin had erected, and there is a straight path from your present position right up to God's greatest glory. Come now, even now, unto the Lord, believing in the atonement which *is* achieved.

II. Secondly, let us meditate upon THE PERSON ACCOMPLISHING THE WORK.

Once, in the end of the world, has HE appeared; remember who it was that came to take away sin, that you may find solid and substantial ground for comfort, and may the Holy Spirit help you to stand upon it. He who came to take away sin did not come unsent. He was appointed and delegated by God. As Toplady has put it in his hymn—

"The God for your unrighteousness
Deputed to atone."

He was not only so appointed and elected, but He was also qualified by God. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him. He came in His Father's name, clothed with His Father's authority: "I do not My own will," He said, "but the will of Him who sent Me." He continually calls it His Father's work and business which He came to do. This ought to give us richest consolation. Jesus is no amateur Savior, who has no right to appear as our representative—He comes in a legal and proper manner. The King of kings has appointed Him, and what He does He does in the name and by the authority of God. God has sent His Son into the world. His death, though voluntary on His own part, was not without the consent and will of His Father. It pleased the Father to bruise Him—He has put Him to grief. Should we not, when God has set Him forth as a propitiation for sin, should we not cheerfully accept whom God appoints?

Attentively observe the constitution of His person. He who came to save men is no other than God; therefore is He capable of viewing sin from God's point of view, and capable of understanding what was due God: by bracing His Godhead to His manhood He was capable, in His twofold nature, of sustaining pangs which humanity could not have endured apart from Godhead, and of receiving into His infinite mind a sight of sin, and a horror concerning it such as no finite mind ever could have endured. You think you comprehend sin? My brothers and sisters, you cannot. It is an evil too monstrous for the human mind to fully know its heights and depths, its lengths and breadths; but Christ, who is God incarnate, knew what sin meant; He plumbed it to the very bottom, and knew how deep it was; He gazed upon it, and felt all the horror of its unrighteousness, ingratitude, and turpitude. Its sinfulness struck His mind

with all its force, and overwhelmed His holy soul with a horror which none but He could bear. He was a perfect man, and therefore had no need to die, else His death were for Himself. It behooved Him to suffer, not because He was the Son of God, or the Son of man, but because He was the Redeemer, the sponsor and the surety of men. Can you trust Him? When I have felt the burden of my sin, I do confess I have at times felt as if it were too great to be taken away by any conceivable power, but, on the other hand, when I have seen the excellence of my Master's person, the perfection of His manhood, the glory of His Godhead, the wondrous degree of His anguish, the solid value of His obedience, I have felt as if my sin were too little a thing to need so vast a sacrifice. I have felt like John Hyatt who, when dying, said he could not only trust Christ with one soul, but he could trust him with a million souls if he had them. Were my sins greater than they are, and God forbid they should be—were my sense of them 10,000 times more vivid than that sense is—and I could wish I had a more clear and humbling view of my own iniquity, yet even then I know my Lord and Master is a greater Savior than I am a sinner. From the constitution of His person as God and man, I am certain that if I had heaped up my iniquities till they assailed the skies, though, like the giants in the ancient mythology, I had piled Pelion upon Ossa, mountain of sin upon mountain of rebellion, and had thought to scale the very throne of God in my impious rebellion, yet the precious blood of Jesus Christ could cleanse me from all sin.

My dear hearer, if you are trembling because of your guilt, do not try to be rid of a sense of the guilt of sin, but study much and devoutly the person of God, the sin-bearer; let your thoughts dwell upon the great Savior and His work, and so shall you be able to say, "I *will*, even *I* will believe that Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto Him, and I will cast myself upon Him. I will rest in His atonement *now.*"

I feel as if I must pause to say to some here, how anxiously do I wish that they would, this morning, have done with seeking rest where no rest is to be found. Have done with reliance upon anything within or anything without, except the Son of God. God Himself puts away sin. What more do you want? You have a God to be your Savior, and will you link your pitiful weakness with His Omnipotence? Would you yoke an ant with a cherubim? Will you join your rags to the fair white linen of the Righteousness of Christ? Your nothingness—shall that contribute to His fullness? Your strength! It is perfect weakness, and your merit is a lie; will you bring these to put them side by side with Jesus? No, sinner, may the Holy Spirit compel you now to rest on Him who, in such a glorious manner, has put away sin in the end of the ages by the sacrifice of Himself.

If those two points do not yield you comfort, I will gladly hope and pray that a third consideration drawn from the text may do so.

III. Note in the text THE APPEARANCE MENTIONED. "Now once in the end of the ages has He appeared to put away sin." Dwell on this.

The way by which God has put away sin is one which is not obscure, concealed, ambiguous, inexplicable, but one which is eminently plain and manifest. You will remember that when the High Priest made atonement for sin, he took the basin filled with blood, and passed within the veil. No one saw him there; and while he stood before the mercy seat and

sprinkled blood, no human eye beheld it—his typical work was a thing of mystery. But, my brothers and sisters, the great High Priest and Prophet of our profession has torn the veil and appeared openly, and the putting away of sin by Him is a manifest thing which can be seen by the understanding; no, in some respects, it was even seen by human eyes and heard by mortal ears. Christ appeared, that is to say, when He came down among men, He lived for no less than 32 years under daily human inspection. He was seen as a Child in the manger by shepherds and by Eastern wise men; He was not concealed and put away like Moses, hidden from the Egyptian murderers, but He was the Observed of all observers. As a child, no doubt, His bringing-up was well known, so that they said, "His sisters and His brothers, are they not all with us?" "As for this man, we know where He is." That short portion of His life which was allotted to public ministry was public in the highest degree. "In secret," said He, "I did nothing." "I taught openly in your streets." For "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," says John, "and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." No, more, not only was His Manhood apparent, but His Godhead, too. Did He not raise the dead with His voice? When He walked on the sea, when He healed the leper, when He opened the blind eyes, when He unstopped the deaf ears, were not all these gleams and glimpses of His eternal power and Godhead? These things were not seen by a few priests set apart to enter into the sacred circle, and then to bear witness, but throughout all Galilee and Judea it was openly heard abroad that the Messiah had come, and "these things were not done in a corner."

And further, beloved, the great act by which our Lord redeemed us was an open act. True, there were inward depths into which the human mind cannot dive. God knows, and God alone, all that His beloved suffered; but still, the scourging and the mocking, the spitting and the crowning with thorns, the nailing and the Crucifixion, and the death—these were open and manifest things. Did not all Jerusalem ring with the news that Jesus of Nazareth, a man sent of God, had been put to death?

And I will proceed a step further. Not only were the Incarnation of Christ, and His Deity, and His death, manifest things, but the way in which these things relate to the forgiveness of sin is also clearly revealed to us. We do not come to you this morning, and say, "Believe in Jesus Christ—it is a great mystery, you cannot understand it, but if you trust in Jesus Christ, God will save you," but we tell you that there is a ground for your trust which your reason may apprehend: it is this, that Jesus Christ stood in the place of sinners; that God visited Him with the stripes which were due to us; that, to use the words of our hymn—

"He bore, that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire."

Now, this is a clear explanation of the plan of Salvation. Not thus is it with the mummeries of superstition. The priests of Baal tell us that when they take an infant in their arms, and put water on its face, using a certain ritual, that the unconscious baby becomes then and there a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven: can they tell us how this marvelous change is worked upon a dormant intellect, a slumbering soul? No, they can only mutter that it is by some occult influence! Occult, indeed! For the child grows up to live as others

live, and perhaps to die in unbelief. Such mummeries, with their base pretensions to occult influences, are worthy to be ranked with the whispers and incantations of the witch of Endor, or the dealings of Balaam, the son of Peor. But *we* can tell you how it is that sin is put away by the sacrifice of Christ. There is nothing occult in the cross. The doctrine of the atonement appeals to the understanding and the judgment. Christ pays the debt—then, of course, the believer is free. Christ suffers for me. Then how can two suffer for the one offense? Here is something for men in their wits to think of; something for the most profound intellect to ponder over. As for the shams of confession, priestly absolution, etc., which Baal's priests are continually thrusting in your way instead of our blessed Lord and Master—such shams that my soul boils at the very thought of them—regard them not, neither endure them! With their vestments, their genuflections, and their ceremonies, they are as wizards that peep and mutter, and forge a lie to deceive. They would use an unknown language if they dared, like Babylon's priests; as it is, their intoning makes plain words hard to be understood. Their religion is not a revelation, but a rejection; not a manifestation of God, but a veiling of His face. Like the children of the old covenant of bondage, they have a veil over their faces, and they see not the truth of God; but we who preach Jesus Christ in the fullness of His gospel, use great plainness of speech, for we tell you good news which you can comprehend.

We tell you the truth of God, which appeals to your understanding and intellect—for once in the end of the ages Jesus Christ has made a disclosure of Himself, has brought life and immortality to light, and has revealed to you how God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Surely there is no one here who does not understand the plan of substitution; if there were, I would try to explain it still further. Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, stood in the place of men—in your place, dear hearer, if you trust Him, He suffered for *you*. You can understand how God is just in taking this sacrifice, offered voluntarily, instead of your sacrifice—punishing Christ instead of you, and then saying to you, "I have vindicated the honor of My government; I have magnified My law and shown that it must not be trifled with, and now I forgive you—freely do I pardon you, for Jesus died." I pray you receive with your heart what you have accepted with your understanding. My dear hearer, kick not against a gospel so simple, so just to God, so safe to you. Yield to it, I pray you, yield now, and remember, if you believe in the appointed Savior, you are saved! If you will trust yourself now with Jesus Christ, He will not fail you; He will cover you with His righteousness, cleanse you with His blood, protect you by His power, and, by-and-by, enshrine you in His glory, world without end. But we must pass on.

IV. A fourth matter which should yield us consolation is, THE SACRIFICE ITSELF. "Once in the end of the ages has He appeared to put away sin"—how? *"By the sacrifice of Himself."*

Observe, brothers and sisters, Christ did not come into the world merely to put away sin by His example—His example is most blessed, and if we follow it, it becomes a potent means of promoting virtue. Jesus did not come into the world merely to put away sin by His teaching—although His teaching does do that wherever it is received, since in the strength of His doctrine men become mighty through His Spirit to over-

throw their inbred sin; but we are told in the text that He came to put away sin by sacrifice. Oh, how some people writhe and rage at this! Those Socinians who sat at the foot of the cross when Jesus Christ died, and said, "Let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him," held the same beliefs as their successors who will admire Jesus everywhere but as a sacrifice for sin. Many men kick the crucified Son of God. "No," they say, "the doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine of suffering for sin, sin being put away by blood—it is that which we cannot endure." Know, then, you proud objectors, that this is the gospel, the sum and substance, and essence of mercy's message; this is the good news from heaven, that Jesus Christ has put away sin not by His teaching, nor by His example alone, but by making a bloody sacrifice of Himself.

I fear that this doctrine is covertly assailed by a school of men who mingle with the orthodox, and are much admired for their intellect and boasted liberality. In some way or other they try to get rid of this sacrifice by blood. Substitution, atonement by suffering, they cannot believe in, but I pray you, dear friends, as you would be saved, hold this truth of God. No, do more, build your soul's only hope upon it, for no other foundation can man lay than this—the foundation of salvation through faith in Jesus' blood. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." And nothing but the blood; take the blood of Jesus away, and you have removed the only effectual consolation from a troubled conscience.

Note that the text affirms that our Lord took away sin by the sacrifice, not of His honor, though He left that and forsook the courts and courtiers of heaven; not by the sacrifice of His wealth, for though He was rich, yet for our sake He became poor; it does not say that He took away sin by the sacrifice of His reputation, though He did make a sacrifice of that, and made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant—but it was the sacrifice of *HIMSELF*—His body and His soul. It was that sacrifice, my brothers and sisters, which commenced in Gethsemane when the bloody sweat bedewed Him from head to foot, when every portion of His body and every power of His soul was full of anguish and dismay; it was that sacrifice which was carried on in the halls of Pilate, before the judgment seat of Caiaphas, at the bar of blustering Herod; a sacrifice which He offered when they scourged Him, when they plaited a crown of thorns, when they spat upon Him, when they struck Him with their fists and mocked Him, a sacrifice which culminated when He hung upon the cross in the extreme of thirst, and shrieked, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" O sinner, I would that you would stand at the foot of the cross, and think of Jesus till you could find comfort! I believe the shortest way to faith is to consider well the *object* of faith. The true way to get comfort is not to try and comfort yourself away from the cross, but think of Christ dying for you till you are comforted; say to your soul, "I will never depart from the cross until I am washed in His precious blood!—

'Blest 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 know the healing came to the sin-bitten by looking at the serpent, not by looking at their own wounds, nor yet by hearing about the cure of

others; and, even so, healing will come to you, not by looking at sin, nor hearing about Christ, so much as by fixing your mind's eye upon the cross, and meditating upon Him who died there, till, as by considering His merits, you believe on Him, and so are saved.

Beloved, put these two or three thoughts together. God comes into the world as man—the Mediator dies. Easily said, but what a weight of meaning in it! Now, what merit there must be in the suffering and death of the dying Mediator! What power there must be in the blood of Him who, while He is man, is nevertheless God! Come, guilty sinner, plunge into this fountain filled with blood, and you shall be made clean, or else God speaks not the truth. Come, you blackest, foulest, filthiest, most defiled of all the human race, come now and look to Jesus, dying, bleeding, and you will be saved, for God's Word is pledged to it. He cannot cast into hell the soul that rests upon the sacrifice of Christ. Only let us be well persuaded that sin is put away by nothing but by the Lord Jesus making Himself a sacrifice.

V. Still, if this should not yield comfort, though I pray it may, for one moment I ask you to think, in the fifth place, of THE THOROUGHNESS OF THE WORK WHICH WAS CONTEMPLATED.

In the end of the ages Christ was revealed to *put away* sin. He did not come into the world to merely make it less serious it, or to cover it up, but He came to put it away. Observe, He not only came to put away some of the attributes of sin, such as the filth of it, the guilt of it, the penalty of it, the degradation of it; He came to put away sin *itself*, for sin, you see, is the fountain of all mischief. He did not come to empty out the streams, but to clear away the fatal source of the pollution. He appeared to put away sin itself, sin in its essence and being. Do not forget that He did take away the filth of sin, the guilt of sin, the punishment of sin, the power of sin, the dominion of sin, and that one day He will kill in us the very being and existence of sin—but remember that He aimed His stroke at sin itself. My Master seemed to say, as the king of Syria did of old, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king." He aimed His shafts at the monster's head, smote his vital parts, and laid him low. He put hell itself to flight, and captivity was led captive. What a glorious word—our Lord *put away* sin! We read in the word of God, sometimes, that He cast it into the depths of the sea; that is glorious, nobody can ever find it again—in the shoreless depths of the sea, Jesus drowned our sins.

Again, we find He removed it as far as the east is from the west. Who can measure that distance? Infinite leagues divide the utmost bounds of space—so far has He removed our transgressions from us. We read again that He has made an end of sin. You know what we mean by making an end of a thing, it is done with, annihilated, utterly destroyed and abolished. Jesus, we here read, has put sin away, He has divorced it from us. Sin and my soul are no more married. Christ has put sin away—He has borne it away as the scapegoat carried the iniquity of the people in type and shadow. He has literally taken upon Himself the sins of all His people, and, stronger than Atlas, has borne the load and carried it away and hurled it into His sepulcher, where it lies buried forever. "Who shall lay anything to the charge or God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, rather, that is risen again,

who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Sin is clean gone. If you believe in Christ, there is nothing that can be laid to your charge. The past, the present, the future—every sin was laid on Christ; sins of tongue, and brain, and heart, and hand, and thought, were all laid on Him. Sins against men, sins against God, adultery, murder, blasphemy, everything, all were laid on Jesus. He became, as it were, the common reservoir for all the sin of His people to meet, and then He emptied it all out by His atoning sacrifice; so that the filth of His people is removed. He has crossed the Kidron and put away the filth of sin. You and I may sing concerning sin as Israel sang concerning Egypt when the ransomed nation stood upon the shore of the Red Sea. "The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left."

O for a sweeter voice than Miriam's! O for virgins more joyful and more in tune than the daughters of Israel! O for high-sounding cymbals and lofty timbrels, to resound with our exulting song! "Sing unto Jehovah Jesus, for He has gotten unto Himself the victory; He has appeared and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and now, as for our iniquities, the depths have covered them—there is not one, not one, not one of them left. They sank to the bottom like a stone; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. Sing you unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!"

VI. O that some soul may get a ray of light from the last consideration, if all others shall have failed. THE EVIDENT COMPLETION of this work, upon which we have already touched, demands a word because of its being rendered conspicuous by the word, "once." *"Once* in the end of the ages He has appeared to put away sin."

If He had not put away sin, He would have come again to do it, for Jesus Christ never leaves His work unfinished. What He undertakes He achieves. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands. My brothers and sisters, Christ's one offering put away all sin forever. Away! Away with those priests of Baal with their "unbloody sacrifice," as they call it, offered daily for the propitiation of sin. Traitors to God's truth, traitors to the souls of men, may they never dominate in this land, but may their barefaced impertinencies be cast forth as dung upon the face of the earth, and may they themselves be rejected as salt which has lost its savor. What right have they to eat the bread of a Protestant people while doing the Pope's work? Our Lord has once and for all made an atonement, and all attempts to tamper with His finished work is treason, such as shall be answered for in the court of heaven; and terrible shall be the doom of those who have dishonored Christ in the point where He is most jealous of His honor. Brothers and sisters, Christ's being in heaven today is a proof that there is nothing to divide a sinner from God on God's part—

"If Jesus had not paid the debt, He never had been at freedom set."

He would have been imprisoned in the prison of the tomb at the present moment, if He had not discharged all the debts and liabilities of His people; and His exaltation in heaven is the evidence that He has completed His work. There He takes His seat because the work is done. If the work had not been accomplished, He would be suffering, suffering often, until at the last He could say, "It is finished." But His redemption work is complete, sin is put away, and believers are saved.

What I have to say, in conclusion, is this. Will you not come, poor, guilty, empty, needy sinners? Will you not come and partake of the glorious fullness of Christ's merit this morning? O why do you stand back? You need no fitness. Wait not for it. No goodness is asked of you. Do not look for it. All goodness dwells in Him. Come with your hard hearts, He will soften them; come with the stone that is within, He will take it away and give you a heart of flesh. Come to Jesus now for all—

"True belief and true repentance, every grace that brings us near,
Without money, come to Jesus Christ and buy."

Oh, if I knew how to preach my Master to you plainly, I would. If the words would be called vulgar, I should not care for that as long as I could make men see what is the mystery of Christ Jesus, which was hid in the ages past, but now is made manifest in Him! O trust Him, souls, trust Him, and you shall be saved!

I heard the day before yesterday what greatly cheered me. I heard that at the late meeting of believers at Chicago, one came from the far West, who asked for a missionary to preach in a newly-formed district, and the reason he gave for wishing for the missionary was this, that they had read my sermons on Sunday, and that no less than 200 souls had been converted to God by the reading of those sermons. When I read that report I did exceedingly rejoice, but then I thought, "Alas, there are many who have those sermons first hand, and get no blessing from them." And I thought of some of you who had heard me these many years, and I have been faithful to you—I trust I have—God knows I desire to be—and yet you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity. While across the blue Atlantic, the echo of our words has called men from the grave of sin to life in Christ, you, though you love to listen to us, have not heard our voice in the depths of your soul! Shall it always be so? It will be, I fear, with some of you, for I foresee your ruin. You will go down to hell with the gospel sounding in your ears, and wake up in the pit of hell with this to aggravate your woe, that you knew the gospel and refused it! How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation, so great that angels cannot tell its greatness, and human tongues are dumb, at best, when they attempt to speak of the excellent glory of it? Why will you reject it when it is in your hands, when, if you with your hearts believe and with your mouths confess Christ, you shall be saved? Why those hard hearts? Why those silent mouths? May the eternal Spirit bring you to Jesus, and His shall be the praise, world without end. Amen.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE SWEET HARP OF CONSOLATION
NO. 760

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 14, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Fear not; for I am with you."
Isaiah 41:10.

WE sometimes speak and think very lightly of doubts and fears; but such is not God's estimate of them. Our heavenly Father evidently considers them to be great evils, extremely mischievous to us, and exceedingly dishonorable to Him, for He very frequently forbids our fears, and as often affords us the most potent remedies for them. "Fear not" is a frequent utterance of the divine mouth. "I am with you" is the fervent, soul-cheering argument to support it. Unless the Lord had judged our fears to be a great evil, He would not so often have forbidden them, or have provided such a heavenly remedy for them. I pray that my dear brothers and sisters, who are cast down, may have divine grace to struggle with their despondency and to overcome it. Martin Luther used to say, that to comfort a desponding spirit is as difficult as to raise the dead; but then we have a God who both raises the dead from their graves, and His people from their despair. "Though you lie down among the pots, yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." May the oil of joy be exchanged for mourning by many sorrowing ones this morning!

Sometimes my text is a trumpet of alarm, or a trombone of lamentation, but today it is a harp of sweetest sound. King Saul was subject to fits of deep despondency, but when David, the skillful harper, laid his hand among the obedient strings, the evil spirit departed, overcome by the subduing power of melody. My text is such a harp, and if the Holy Spirit will but touch its strings, its sweet discourse shall charm away the demon of despair. "I am with you"—it is a harp of ten strings containing the full chords of consolation. Its notes quiver to the height of ecstasy or descend to the hollow bass of the deepest grief. Let us see if this psaltery will yield us melody today.

I. In the first place, we shall note THE TIMES WHEN ITS SWEET STRAINS ARE MOST NEEDED.

Occasions when comfort is needed are many; for there are some, who, like the willow, will only flourish in a soil which is always wet with consolation. These are men and women of a sorrowful spirit. If their mothers did not bear them with sorrow, like Jabez, they commenced very early on their own account to accumulate a heritage of woe. As John Bunyan would say, they need not be afraid of the Slough of Despond, for they carry a slough within their own hearts, and are never out of it, or it is

never out of them. They are plants which flourish best in shady places among the dampness of sorrow. They scarcely think themselves safe unless they are unhappy. They fear to be joyous—they tremble to be glad. The high places of the earth do not suit them at all; they delight most to dwell in the Valley of Humiliation; and when they are journeying through that peaceful valley, like Mr. Fearing, they could lie down and kiss the flowers, because the place is so suitable to their meek and lowly spirit. There is something sadly weak about this state of experience, though there is also much to admire: these are they whom the Master carries in His bosom, and does gently lead; these are the shorn lambs of the flock for whom He tempers the wind, for whose sake He stays His rough wind in the day of His east wind. Trembling fellow pilgrims, we would play our harp before you, that, if possible, you may forget your fears awhile; and if you cannot altogether rise superior to your glooms, yet may you, for this hour, at least, take unto yourselves the wings of eagles, and mount above the mists of doubt.

Brothers and sisters, more or less all believers need consolation at all times, because their life is a very peculiar one. The walk of faith is one protracted miracle. The life, the conflict, the support, and the triumph of faith, are all far above the vision of the eyes of sense. The inner life is a world of mysteries. We see nothing beneath or before us, and yet we stand upon a rock, and go from strength to strength. We march onwards unto what seems destruction, and find safety blooming beneath our feet. During our whole Christian life the promises of God must be applied to the heart, or else such is the weakness of flesh and blood, we are ready to go back to the flesh pots of the Egypt of carnal sense, and leave the delights which faith, alone, can yield us. May the Lord give to His people frequently to hear the transporting notes of the harp of the text, "Fear not; for I am with you." "Though you cannot see your way, yet your way is safe, for I will go before you; I the Lord will be your rear guard; I am round about you like a wall of fire, and I will be the glory in the midst of your soul."

Yet there are certain special occasions when the Comforter's work is needed, and one of these certainly is when we are *racked with much physical pain.* Many bodily pains can be borne without affecting the mind, but there are certain others whose sharp fangs insinuate themselves into the marrow of our nature, boring their way most horribly through the brain and the spirit—for these much divine grace is needed. When the head is throbbing, and the heart is palpitating, and the whole system is disarranged, it is so natural to say with Jacob, "All these things are against me," to complain of providence, and to think that we are the men above all others who have seen affliction. *Then* is the time for the promise to be applied with power. "Fear not; for I am with you." "I will make all your bed in your sickness." When bodily pain gives every sign of increasing, or we expect the surgeon with his dreaded knife, then to be sustained under sufferings at the thought of which the flesh shudders, we need the upholding gentleness of God. "Fear not; for I am with you,"

like the song of the nightingale, is most sweet when heard in the night season.

When the trouble comes in another shape, namely, in *our relatives' sorrows,* borne personally by those dear to us; when we see them fading gradually by consumption, like lilies snapped at the stalk; or when suddenly they are swept away as the flowers fall beneath the mower's scythe; when we have to visit the grave again and again, and each time leave a part of ourselves behind us; when our garments are the ensigns of our woe, and we would gladly sit down in the dust and sprinkle ashes upon our heads, because the desire of our eyes is taken from us—then we require the heavenly Comforter; then, indeed, the skillful harper is in great demand, and sweet to the heart are notes like these, "Fear not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God."

Again, *when all the currents of providence run counter to us;* when, after taking arms against a sea of trouble we find ourselves unable to stem the boisterous torrent, and are being swept down the stream, loss succeeding loss, riches taking to themselves wings and flying away, till we see nothing before us but absolute need, and perhaps are brought actually to know what need is—then we require abundant grace to sustain our spirits. Ah, it is not so easy to come down with perfect resignation from wealth to poverty, from abundance to scant; that is a philosophy to be learned only where Paul was taught it, when he said, "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content." Some of you would find it hard to be content if you were in yon widow's position, with seven children, and nothing to maintain them upon but the shameful pittance which is wrung out to her for her labors with her needle, at which she sits, stitch, stitch, stitch, far into the dead of the night, stitching her very soul away. You might not find it quite so easy to bear poverty if you were shunned by the men who courted you in your prosperity, and who now do not know you if they meet you in the street. There are bitternesses about the poor man's lot which are not easily rinsed from his cup, and *then* it is that the gracious soul needs the promise, "Fear not; for I am with you." "Your Maker is your husband." A Father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widow is God in His holy habitation. If you are brought into this condition, may my Lord and Master say to you, "It is I, be not afraid."

And, my brothers and sisters, some of us know what it is to hear this voice of God *in the midst of unusual responsibilities, heavy labors, and great enterprises.* Have you been called by God's providence to undertake a work far beyond your own visible power, and have you plunged into it by faith? You have! Then you will not be a stranger to feelings like these: you will say to yourself, "Was I wise in doing this? Other people have attempted great things and failed—may not I fail ridiculously? When the crowds have gathered to see the mountain in labor, may there not be a ridiculous mouse as the only result? May I not after all, be a mere fanatic, and may not my trust in God be a superstition? Oh, where shall I be if now I should fail?" You may have been sifted in this sieve again and again. But it is delightful indeed when you can feel "God is with me. My responsibilities are overwhelming, but my God is omnipotent. *I* could not

carry the load, but *He* can, and by faith I will cast the burden upon the Most High." Were you ever seeking to win souls, the most blessed of occupations, and have you had to return to your closet saying, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Then you will begin to question whether you were ever called to an enterprise so high and lofty, and perhaps you will be tempted, like Jonah, to take ship and flee away to Tarshish, that you may escape from a service which brings you no honor. At such a juncture, what can be more reassuring than the echo of these words, "'Fear not; for I am with you,' I am with you even in your failure, with you in your casting down, with you in those labors which remain unrequited. 'Fear not; for I am with you,' and the issues must, in the end, all be well"?

Dear friend, did you ever stand, as a servant of God, alone *in the midst of opposition?* Were you ever called to attack some deadly popular error, and, with rough bold hands, like an iconoclast, to dash down the graven images of the age? Have you heard the clamor of many, some saying this thing, and some the other—some saying, "He is a good man," but others saying, "No, but he deceives the people"? Did you ever see the rancor of the priests of Baal flashing from their faces and foaming from their mouths? Did you ever read their hard expressions see their misrepresentations of your speech, and of your motives? And did you ever feel the delight of saying, "The best of all is that God is with us; and, in the name of God, instead of folding up the standard, we will set up our banners. If this is vile, we purpose to be still viler; and throw down the gauntlet once more in the name of the God of truth, against the error of the times"? If you have ever passed through that ordeal, then have you needed the words, "Fear not; for I am with you; be not dismayed; for I am your God." "Who are you that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?" "I will make you unto this people a fenced bronze wall: and they shall fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you." "Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed."

But, my dear friends, we shall want this word of comfort most of all when we go down the shelving banks of the black river, when we hear the booming of its waves, and feel the chill influence of its dark flood, and cannot see to the other side; when the mists of depression of spirit hide from us "Jerusalem the Golden," and our eyes catch no glimpse of the "land that flows with milk and honey," for the soul is occupied with present pain and wrapped in darkness which may be felt. In such a condition—

"We linger shivering on the brink,
And fear to launch away."

We talk of death too lightly. It is solemn work to the best of men. It would be no child's play to an apostle to die. Yet if we can hear the whisper, "Fear not; for I am with you," then the mists will sweep away from the river, and that stream which was dark will become clear as crystal, and we shall see the "Rock of Ages" at the bottom of the flood. Then shall we descend with confidence, and hear the splash of the death stream, and think it music. Yes, and it shall be music as it melts into the songs of the

seraphs, who shall accompany us through its depths. It will be delightful when those mists have rolled away, to see the shining ones coming to meet us, to go with us up the celestial hills to the pearly gate, to accompany us to the throne of God, where we shall rest forever. Happy they who shall hear their Lord say to them, "I am with you, be not afraid."

After death, we read in this word of great events, what shall happen to us, but we feebly comprehend the revelation. After death solemnities shall follow which may well strike a man with awe as he thinks upon them. There is a judgment and a resurrection; there is a trumpet which shall summon the sons of men to hear from heaven's doomsday-book their future destiny. The world shall be on fire, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; there will be a pompous appearing of the great judge at the dread assize; there will be the winding up of the dispensation, and the gathering together of all things in one that are in Christ; and there will be the casting down into hell of the tares bound up in bundles to burn; and the fire that never shall be quenched will send up its smoke forever and ever. What about that future? Why, faith can look forward to it without a single tremor; she fears not, for she hears the voice of the everlasting God saying to her, "'I am with you.' I will be with you when your dust shall rise—your first transporting vision shall be the King in His beauty. You shall be satisfied when you shall wake up in His likeness. I will be with you when the heavens are on a blaze, your preserver, comforter, your heaven, your All in All." Therefore, fear not, but look forward with unmoved delight to all the mystery and the glory of the age unborn.

Thus have I mentioned a few of the occasions in which this harp sounds most sweetly. All through life, I may picture the saints as marching to its music, even as the children of Israel set forward to the notes of the silver trumpets. Israel came to the Red Sea—they might well be afraid, for the Egyptians were behind them—the crack of their whips might be heard; the rolling sea was before them, but Israel marched confidently through its depths, because the word was given, "Fear not; Jehovah is with His people." See the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, how safely do they follow its direction, even through the heart of the sea! They tread the sand on the other side: it is an arid waste—how shall they support themselves or their flocks? "Fear not; for I am with you!" Lo, the manna drops from heaven, and the waters ripple from the Rock. But look! They come to Jordan! It is their last difficulty, and then they shall reach the land of their inheritance. Jordan divides—what ails you, O Jordan, that you were driven back? God was with His people—they feared not, but entered into their rest: this is the heritage of all the saints. As I thought of the life of faith, I saw before my eyes, as in a vision, a lofty staircase of light, and, led by an invisible hand, I mounted step by step; when I had ascended long and far, it turned and turned again and again. I could see no supports to this elevated staircase, no pillars of iron, no props of stone—it seemed to hang in air. As I climbed, I looked up to see where the staircase went, but I saw no further than the step where I stood; but now and then the clouds of light above me part-

ed, and I thought I saw the throne of the eternal and the heaven of His glory.

My next step seemed to be upon the air, and yet when I boldly put down my foot I found it firm as rock beneath me. I looked back on the steps which I had trod, and was amazed, but I dared not tarry, for *"forward"* was the voice which urged me on, and I knew, for faith had told me, that that winding stair would end at last, beyond the sun and moon and stars, in the excellent glory. As now and then I gazed down into the depths out of which the stair had lifted me, I shuddered at my fate should I slip from my standing, or should the next step plunge me into the abyss! Over the edge of that where I stood, I gazed with awe, for I saw nothing but a gaping void of black darkness, and into this I must plunge my foot in the faith of finding another step beneath it. I would have been unable to advance, and would have sat down in utter despair had I not heard the word from above of one in whom I trusted, saying, "Fear not; for I am with you." I knew that my mysterious guide could not err. I felt that Infinite faithfulness would not bid me take a step if it were not safe, and therefore mounting upward, I stand at this hour happy and rejoicing, though my faith is all above my own comprehension, and my work above my own ability—

"When we cannot see our way,
Let us trust, and still obey;
He who bids us forward go,
Cannot fail the way to show.
Though enwrapt in gloomy night,
We perceive no ray of light;
Since the Lord Himself is here,
'Tis not meet that we should fear.
Night with Him is never night,
Where He is, there all is light!
When He calls us, why delay?
They are happy who obey."

II. Secondly, we come to you, harp in hand, and pray you TO DISTINCTLY HEAR ITS NOTES.

The sweetness of all the notes melt into each other, but now we shall touch each string by itself, and if you have an educated ear—for all men have not the ear with which to hear the music of God—you will hear that which will solace your souls. "Fear not; for I am with you." What does it mean?

1. In the first place, it means, *"I am with you in deepest sympathy."* When you suffer, you suffer not a new pang; Christ knew that pain long ago. As Baxter puts it—

"Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than He went through before."

No, not only has Jesus once suffered, but in all of our affliction He is still afflicted. When His servants were persecuted, the Lord Jesus cried out of heaven to the persecutor, "Why do you persecute Me?" The touching of the feeblest member is felt by the Head; though He is crowned with light, yet He is not insensitive to the glowing of His feet, which John tells us are like fine brass glowing in the furnace. Our Lord Jesus is moved with

intense sympathy towards the members of His body, for His union with us is of a most intimate kind. It is no small comfort to know that Jesus is a fellow sufferer with us; that we have a high priest who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; that we are not alone treading a thorny path where His feet have never trod, but we can plainly see the bloody footprints of the feet of the Man of Sorrows. Everywhere Christ is with us in the sympathy of His soul. Let that one note sound well. Perhaps I touched the string amiss, but touch it again, and see if angels' music can excel it.

2. But next. The Lord is *with us in community of interests.* That is to say, if the believer should fail, God Himself would be dishonored. Luther rejoiced greatly whenever he felt that he had brought God into his quarrel. "Well," said he, "if it was I, Martin Luther, and the Pope of Rome who had to fight it out, I might well despair; but if it is the Pope against Martin Luther and Martin Luther's God, then woe be unto Antichrist! Well may the cold sweat stand on her brow, for when God is with us, who are they who are against us?" Now, God is in the quarrel of the man who attacks error; God is in the quarrel of the man who is trying to do good, to reclaim his fellow creatures from sin, and to establish the kingdom of Christ. Yes, and when you can quote a divine promise, God is engaged in your affairs, because if He does not keep that promise, He is not true. In the matter of your own salvation, since it is in the purpose of God that you should be brought safely home, your ultimate salvation touches the honor of the Redeemer—

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep;
All that His heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep."

It is with us as it is with the timid traveler in the Alps who is attended by a faithful guide. He shivers as he passes under overhanging cliffs or glides down shelving precipices, or climbs the slippery steeps of glaciers, but if his guide has linked himself with him he is reassured. The guide has said, "You are trembling, sir, but the way is safe, I have passed it many a time with many a traveler as weak as you are. But to reassure you and make you feel how safe you are, look here!" and he straps a rope round the traveler, and round himself, "Now," he says, "both of us or neither. We shall both get safely home or neither." As he bids his charge pass on with courage, he says to him, "Now, remember, if there is any danger, it is as great a danger to me as it is to you. We both go down together, or we are saved together." And the traveler plucks up spirit, and finds his foot stands firm where it had slipped before. Now, Jesus has bound Himself hard and fast to every soul that trusts Him, and if you do not find your way to heaven, neither will Christ, for it is both of us, or neither—either you must win the crown of glory, or Christ must lose it too. How sweet is this to think upon! Strike that string again! Strike it well in your retirement this afternoon, and let the music of it ring in your ears, "Fear not; for I am with you."

3. Again, the next string of the harp, "Fear not; for I am with you," gives this sound. *"I am with you in providential aid."* We believe in the

providence of God, but we do not believe half enough in it. Remember that omnipotence has servants everywhere, set in their places at every point of the road. In the old days of the post horses, there were always relays of swift horses ready to carry onward the king's mail. It is wonderful how God has His relays of providential agents; how when He has done with one, there is always another just ready to take its place. Sometimes you have found one friend fail you—he is just dead and buried. "Ah," you say, "what shall I do?" Well, well, God knows how to carry on the purposes of His providence; He will raise up another. How strikingly punctual providence is! You and I make appointments, and miss them by half-an-hour; but God never missed an appointment yet. God never is before His time, though we often wish He were; but He never is behind, no, not by one tick of the clock. When the children of Israel were to go down out of Egypt, all the Pharaohs in the pyramids, if they had risen to life again, could not have kept them in bondage another half-minute. "Thus says the Lord, Let My people go!" It was time, and go they must. All the kings of the earth and all the princes thereof, are in subjection to the kingdom of God's providence, and He can move them just as He pleases; and as the showman pulls his string and moves his puppets, so can God move all that are on earth, and the angels in heaven, according to His will. And now, trembler, why are you afraid? "Fear not; for I am with you." All the mysterious arrangements of providence work for our good. Touch that string again, dear friends, you who are in trouble, and see if there my harp is not a rare instrument.

4. Next, *God is with us in secret sustaining power.* He well knows how, if He does not interpose openly to deliver us in trouble, to infuse strength into our sinking hearts. "There appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him," it is said of our Lord; and I do not doubt but what invisible spirits are often sent by God from heaven to invigorate our spirits when they are ready to sink. Have you ever felt it? You sat down an hour ago and wept as if your heart would break, and then you bowed your knee in solemn prayer and spread the case before the Lord, and afterwards when you came down from the chamber, you felt as if you could joyfully encounter the trouble; you were humbled and bowed under it, as a child under a chastening rod, but you gave yourself up to it. You knew it was your Father who struck, and so you did not rebel any longer, but you went into the world determined to meet the difficulty which you thought would crush you, feeling that you were quite able to sustain it. I have read of those who bathe in those baths of Germany which are much impregnated with iron, that they have felt, after bathing, as if they were made of iron, and were able in the heat of the sun to cast off the heat as though they were dressed in steel. Happy indeed are they who bathe in the bath of such a promise as this, "I am with you!" Put your whole soul into that consoling element; plunge into it, and you will feel your strength suddenly renewed so that you can bear troubles which before would have overburdened you.

5. And, once more, there is a way by which the Lord can be with His people which is best of all, namely, *by sensible manifestations of His*

presence, imparting joy and peace which surpasses all understanding. I shall not venture to explain the exhilaration, the rapture, which is caused in a child of God by the consciousness that God is near him. In one sense He is always near us; but there is an opening of our eyes, and an unsealing of our ears, a putting away of the external senses and an opening of the inner spiritual sense, by which the inner life of the Christian becomes wondrously conscious of the pervading presence of the Most High. Describe it, I cannot; it is not a thing for words; it is like what heaven must be; it is a stray gleam of the sunlight of paradise fallen upon this sinful world. You are as sure that God is with you as you are sure that you are in the body. Though the walls do not glow, and though the humble floor does not blaze with light, and though no rustle of angels' wings is heard, yet you are like Moses when he took off his shoes, for the place where you stand has become holy ground to you. Bowed down, I have felt it, until it seemed as if the spirit must be crushed; yet, at the same time, lifted up till the exceeding weight of glory became too great a joy, too overwhelming for flesh and blood. Ah, then, in such moments—

"Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled,
Then I can smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world.
Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall,
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my heaven, my all!
There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast."

I have tried thus, but in a poor way, to show in what senses God appears to help His people. I beseech you, let each string yield you music, and pass not over these words hurriedly, for there is an abyss of solemn joy within them if you know but how to plunge into it.

III. Thirdly, having thus bid you distinctly hear the notes of my harp, I must now request you to MEDITATE MUCH UPON THE SWEETNESS OF THOSE NOTES.

How shall I bring out their delights? Taste and see, my brothers and sisters, that the Lord is good. It is the shortest mode and the surest of knowing the sweetness of God's goodness. Let me, however, put a few things before you.

The comfort of my text excels all other comfort under heaven. Here is a person who has lost all his goods, and is very poor. He is met tomorrow morning by a generous friend who says to him, "Fear not, you shall go share and share with me. You know that I am a person of considerable property; fear not, I know your losses, but I am with you." Now, I feel sure that any person so accosted would go home and say to himself, "Well, now, I have no need of any trouble, I am rich, since one half of what my friend has is more than I had before." Yes, but may not the same losses which fell upon you fall upon your friend? May not the same reverses in commerce which have made you poor, make him poor? And

in that case you are as bad off as ever. Besides, your friend may change his mind; he may find you much too expensive a client and he may one of these days shut his door against you. But, now, God says to you, "I am with you." Now, the Lord has much more than your friend; He is much more faithful; He will never grow weary of you; He cannot change His mind. Surely it is better for you to feel that God is with you than to rely upon an arm of flesh. Is it not so? Believer, you will never prefer man to God, will you? Will you prefer to rest in a poor, changeable man's promise, rather than to rest upon the immutable covenant of God? You would not dare to say that, though I dare say you have acted as if you would! I am afraid such is our unbelief, that sometimes we should really prefer the poor arm of flesh to the almighty arm of God—what a disgrace to us! But in our sober senses, sitting here this morning, we must confess that God's, "I am with you" is better than the kindest assurance of the best of friends.

I will suppose that one of you may be engaged in Christian service, and you have been working very hard, would not you feel very happy if God were to raise up a dozen young spirits who would rally round you and help you? "Oh!" you say, "yes, I could go then to my grave saying, Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace since there are so many others enlisted in the good cause." Well, but is it so? Might they not also grow as weary as yourself? And what are they compared with the world's needs? And may they not soon be taken away, or prove unfaithful? If God says, "I am with you," is not that better than 20,000 of the brightest spirits; yes, and thousands and thousands of the most industrious missionaries? For what would they all be without God? So that the only comfort they can bring you, they have to borrow first of all from Him. Let us, then, take the naked promise of God, for it is enough, and more than enough, though all earth's springs were dry.

But, beloved, to make you sensible of the value of this promise, let me remind you that there is *all the comfort here that heaven itself could afford.* When that young man's eyes were opened by the prophet, and he saw the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire, round about Elisha, he said to himself, "Now Elisha is safe enough, they cannot touch him while those chariots of fire protect him." Yes, but what are angels but ministering spirits—what are they without God? They are dead, inactive, unless God shall give them their energy and fiery life. So, my brothers and sisters, if it were written, "The angels shall always be with you," that would not be one half as blessed as this, "Fear not; for I am with you." We have the angels, but we have the angels' Master; we have the chariots of God, which are 20,000, but, better than that, we have God Himself to be our protector. "I am with you." O child of God, all the seraphim and cherubim could not yield you such a fullness of joy as this!

Note again that when the text says, "I am with you," it gives you something which is sufficient for all emergencies. In the succeeding verses of the chapter before us, we find one engaged in a service, and for his comfort it was written, "I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." presently we find

that same person engaged in warfare, and then the promise changed—"I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff." Then we find that individual becomes a traveler, traveling without water in a barren land, and again the promise is altered again—"I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys." Then the traveler became a farmer, but the soil was fruitless, and he could grow nothing. Then came the word of God, "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree." So, my beloved, no matter where we may be cast, God is with us. The Manx people have for their motto three legs, so that whichever way you throw them they are sure to stand; but as for the Christian, it is impossible for them to be thrown down by misfortune, or even by the infernal powers. We shall stand, for God upholds us. Carried to the highest heavens to judgment, God is with us; cast down to the depths of sufferings, still He is with us; slumbering in the tomb, as our dust soon must, still God is with us. It is not possible for the Christian to be in any condition in which these words shall not be to him universal medicine for all disease, universal armor against every weapon, universal supply of every necessity.

Now divide the words, and view them separately. "I AM." Do you know what this means, *"I am"?* God is self-existent, eternal, independent, sitting on no precarious throne, nor borrowing leave to be. *"I am."* It is no other than "JEHOVAH," "JAH," "I AM," who has become the friend of His people. Note the tense of it—not, "I was," not, "I shall be," but, *"I am."* We have, yesterday, today, and forever, the same great *"I AM."* "I am"—what? "I am *with you,"* poor, feeble thing as you are. As *"I AM"* was in the bush, and made it glow with golden fire, transforming it from a despicable bush to become a throne for Deity, so shall it be with you. "I am *with you,* poor bush that might readily be burned; I will fill you with Myself, and make you radiant with glory, for I have set My love upon you from of old." My spirit bows beneath the majesty of the text. I commend it to your earnest consideration. Bear it with you to your chambers of meditation this afternoon, and God open it up to you, that you may be filled with delight.

IV. In the last place, I would have all my hearers remember that though I have spoken of my text as a harp yielding rarest music, yet IT NEEDS THAT THE EAR BE TUNED BEFORE ITS MUSIC CAN BE APPRECIATED.

It is not every man who understands the delights of harmony, even in ordinary music. The clown stands by and thinks that a brass band in the street, with all its horrors, would be almost as good. He does not understand how sound accords with sound, he knows nothing of "linked sweetness long drawn out." So, beloved, there are tens of thousands of men, who know nothing at all of what it is to have God with them. Yes, this would be their dread, they would be glad to escape from God if they could. Is it so with you, my hearers? Are you afraid of God? Would you shun His presence? Is it because you are His enemy, and conscience makes a coward of you? If you were His child, your spirit would long for

His embrace, and as the hart thirsts for the water brooks, so would you thirst after your God. Now, in order to appreciate the sweetness of the text, you must have faith, and the more faith you have, the more sweet it will become. You must believe in a real God. I am afraid that to most men God is a myth, a spiritual something which they have not discerned; but faith realizes God, is sure of His existence, puts eyes into the soul to see God with, and gives hands to the soul to lay hold upon Him. You must realize God, and you must be firmly persuaded of His veracity, that He cannot lie, that it is impossible for Him to deviate a hair's breadth from perfect truth, and that He cannot also fail in power. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" "Is His arm shortened that it cannot save?" Such questions as these must meet with a quick answer in our spirit. We must feel that there is with us a mighty worker, a real working, active, potent, faithful, truthful Agent, who, having promised to help us, will help us, and never leave us nor forsake us till He has accomplished all His eternal purpose, and brought us to Himself in heaven. Ah, my brothers and sisters, if you have come to this, and can always stay there, I only wish I could; I can believe in God, and do believe in Him; glory be to His name—and have seen His arm uplifted and His faithfulness and truth displayed as few have seen, but yet that awful unbelief, that dark vapor which is the death of comfort, worse than cholera, this pest, this infidelity, for which no excuse can be made, this most damnable of sins, this which has no foundation, for which I will not whisper even a thought of apology, this still creeps over us and unmans us! How it throws us into the mire! How it breaks our bones, and like a mighty Juggernaut, rolls over our very nature to crush it into nothing! O God, save us from it! Help us to trust You! It is all we want; it is human omnipotence. Help us to rest upon You! It is all we want; it is heaven to our souls. Help us to be sure that You are, and that You are the rewarder of them who diligently seek You, and that Your promise must stand fast and firm; this were to make us sons of God indeed and of a truth, and to give us the enjoyment of heaven while lingering in the valleys of earth! May God bless us with this faith!

Some of you have no faith at all. O may the eternal Spirit beget faith in you now, or else your portion must be wretchedness, your end must be confusion, your eternity must be misery. God save us through faith in Jesus!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 41.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE SHRILL TRUMPET OF ADMONITION
NO. 761

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 21, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. Therefore, behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers, hat shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles." Jeremiah 48:11, 12.

FOR a considerable season the country of Moab had been free from the inroads of war and the terrors of pestilence. The nation had, therefore, become so conceitedly secure, that the Lord said, "We have heard the pride of Moab (he is exceedingly proud), his loftiness, and his arrogance, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart." The people became vain, dominating, boastful, and mocked at their afflicted neighbors the Israelites, manifesting ungenerous joy in their sorrows. "For was not Israel a derision unto you? Was he found among thieves? For since you spoke of him, you skipped for joy." From this pride sprang luxury and all those other vices which find a convenient lair in the repose of unbroken prosperity. The warriors of Moab said, "We are mighty and strong men of war." As vainglorious sinners, they defied all law and power; trusting in Chemosh, they despised Jehovah, and magnified themselves against the Lord. The prophet compares that country to wine which has been allowed to stand unstirred and unmoved—it settles on its lees, grows strong, retains its aroma, and gathers daily fresh body and spirit. "But," he says, "the day shall come when God shall shake this undisturbed liquor, when He shall send wandering bands of Chaldeans who shall waste the country, so that the bottles shall be broken and the vessels shall be emptied, and the proud prosperity of Moab shall end in utter desolation." The unusual repose of Moab had been the envy of the people of Israel, but they might well cease to envy when they understood how suddenly a fire should come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and devour the corner of Moab, and how soon the howling should be heard, "Woe be unto you, O Moab! The people of Chemosh perish: for your sons are taken captive, and your daughters captives."

The fact that continued prosperity breeds carnal security is not only proved by the instance of Moab, but is lamentably confirmed in the history of others. In the first place, *this is the common mischief of ungodly men;* in the second place, *this is the frequent danger of the godliest.*

I. I shall first speak to THE UNCONVERTED, THE GODLESS, THE PRAYERLESS, THE CHRISTLESS.

Many of you, though not all, become like Moab. At ease from your youth, you are not emptied from vessel to vessel but settled upon your

lees, and therefore you grow careless and heedless. This is so common a mischief among the ungodly, that the whole world was in this condition immediately before the great deluge which destroyed the ancient race. We read that "they married and were given in marriage." They did eat and did drink, and were drunk even until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the floods came and swept them all away. The preacher of righteousness for 120 years warned them that their sins had become intolerable to heaven, and that vengeance would surely be taken upon their devices, but they laughed the prophet to scorn: they made "the old fool," as they doubtless called him, the butt of their ridicule; the wits quoted him as the chief of fools, and the drunks in their songs spoke against him. The disobedient worldlings of those olden times went upon their way as though their jollity would last forever, and their sin would go unpunished. How changed their notes when the rains descended with pitiless continuance—not in drops of mercy, fertilizing the thirsty earth, but in cataracts of vengeance, sweeping away every living thing! How deep their despair when the Lord drew up the sluices of the great "deep which lies under," and bade the long imprisoned floods leap up from their dens and ravage the earth! Then, as the despisers saw the prophet's ark alone secure, and the prophet's family alone delivered, they beheld and wondered, and perished as their long prosperity and carnal ease gave place to utter desolation. The world, however, is so little changed today, that if the Lord Jesus Christ should now come, as come He will "in such an hour as you think not," He would find the mass of men still in the same condition. Even at this day the inquiry is made, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were." Whenever our Lord shall come, men will be unprepared for His Advent, for "as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man." They shall still be given to their vanities, and indulging themselves in their sins, till He shall come in the clouds of heaven to take vengeance upon the multitude who know not God. This is the abiding state of the world which lies in the wicked one—settled on its lees, it is not emptied from vessel to vessel, and therefore it dreams itself into presumptuous peace. When pestilence or wars do not stir the nations, they soon grow bold in sin, and provoke the Lord to jealousy.

But, my dear friends, it is generally very useless to talk about the world at large; generalities have little effect upon our minds—we must come to particulars. We will draw one or two pictures which will represent some who are present here this morning. Perhaps there may be but very few of the first sort—*the bold offenders who are at ease in open sin.* They began life with iniquity, and they have made terrible progress in it. They have taken their degrees in the college of Beelzebub; they have become Masters in the Art of wickedness, Doctors in Belial, able to teach others also—corrupt and corrupting. These men are not disturbed in their sins; their conscience has been seared as with a hot iron; things which others would tremble at are to them a jest; they make a mockery of sin; they play with burning coals of lust, and carry fire in their bosom, and boast that they are not burned. They go from iniquity to iniquity, as the vulture from carcass to carcass; they labor in the way of evil, as men dig for hidden treasure; "And they say, How does God know? And is there

knowledge in the Most High?" "And if He does know," they say, "what do we care? Who is Jehovah, that we should obey Him? Who is the Almighty that we should tremble at His word?" Throughout this wicked city, there are hundreds and thousands who, having enjoyed until now immunity in their sins, suppose that their transgressions are as light a thing with God as with themselves. These are they of whom David said, "They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain; violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches." Yet, O you haughty ones, take heed, for Pharaoh, who was your prototype in the olden days, found the way of pride to be hard at the end. That haughty prince was like a great dragon with a neck of iron, but the Lord tamed him at the Red Sea; when the wheels were taken off his chariots, and they dragged heavily, while the floods eagerly leaped upon him as their prey, then he knew that none exalts himself against Jehovah to prosper, for He breaks in pieces the mighty in His wrath, and destroys them in His hot displeasure. O you haughty ones, remember the king Belshazzar, another of your tribe, and how he grew great with the spoils of the nations. Remember that night of feasting when he drank out of the vessels of God in his daring blasphemy, and stained the holy things of Jehovah with his drunkenness. Read yonder handwriting on the wall. Even now, O despiser, I can see it for you, though you see it not, and this is the interpretation: "You are weighed in the balances and found wanting; your joy shall soon be taken from you, and your life also, and what shall you do in the day when the Lord requires your soul?"

If there are any here this morning who have lived in sin and grown wanton, and have altogether broken loose from divine control, having taken out of their mouths the bit which restrains other men, let them be ashamed and abased this day, for as the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, if they will not tremble now, they shall tremble forever. If the voice of God's ambassador shall not bring you to seek peace and forgiveness, the Lord shall send another herald, not of peace but of judgment, who shall come with another voice than mine, a voice which shall make cold sweat stand on your brow, and your pulse to wax faint and few, while the still small voice sounds terribly in your ear, "This night your soul is required of you."

A far more common form of that carelessness, which is so destructive, is that of *men who give themselves wholly up to the world's business.* Such men, for instance, as one whom Christ called "Fool." You know the story—his fields brought forth plenteously, for he was a skillful farmer, he had bought the newest implements; he had tilled his ground after the most scientific fashion; he had doubled the crops, and increased his riches. This was the one object for which he lived. He was a grower of grain and a hoarder of gold, and nothing more. He said within himself that he must build a temple for his god—his god was himself, and his temple was his barn. "I will pull down my barns and build greater—there will I bestow my goods." This man's case is so common, that if you were to purchase his likeness, many of you might think it was your own pho-

tograph, for do you not, even those of you who come to our places of worship, live unto yourselves? This is the end and object of the most of mankind—to live "respectably," to collect a "competence," to provide, as they say, for their families, which is the Pharisaic cant phrase for selfishness. Do not the mass of men worship their belly, and bow down before no other shrine than self? Is not the life of millions clear, transparent selfishness? "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and with what shall we be clothed?" This is the grand object of human research. The religion of the multitude is, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain." *Gain* is the world's *summum bonum*, the chief of all mortal good, the main chance, the prime objective, the barometer of success in life, the one thing necessary, and the heart's delight. And yet, O worldlings, you who succeed in getting gain, and are esteemed to be shrewd and prudent, Jesus Christ calls you fools, and He is no thrower about of hard terms where they are not deserved.

"You Fool," He said, and why? Because the man's soul would be required of him; and then whose would those things be which he had gathered together? Ah, you who have been prosperous all your days, and made money, and risen in the world, and gathered a competence, and lived to gather wealth—if this is the one thing you care about, tremble and expect your doom! O you careless ones, do you dream that you were made to live for yourselves? Was this the object of your Maker that you should live to gather gold for yourselves and for your children? Did He send you into this world merely that you might scrape together yellow clay? Has your Maker no claim upon you? The Lord who preserves you in being, has He no demands upon you? And if you do not recognize His rights will He not inquire for them in the day when He makes visitation? I would read the text over to all of you unconverted prosperous people—"Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. Therefore, behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles." Hear you yet again the word of the Lord by His servant Isaiah: "Rise up, you women who are at ease; hear my voice, you careless daughters; give ear unto my speech. Many days and years shall you be troubled, you careless women: for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come; tremble, you women who are at ease; be troubled, you careless ones."

A third case is more common, still, *the man who forgets God and lives in slothful ease.* There are many in the world who do not succeed in making money, who do not, indeed, make money their main objective. They are content with what they have, and go through the world with much satisfaction to themselves. They are well known for their easiness of temper and harmlessness of disposition, and therefore they think themselves better than others; yet my text, if read correctly, is a dreadful warning for them. Have you never read of the master who committed to his servants their various talents, giving to one five, and to another two, and to another one? Now, the man with the five talents, and he with the two, went

both into the market and turned over their master's money, putting it out at interest; and when their Lord returned, they presented him with their gains. But the servant with the one talent was one who loved great ease of mind, and did not wish to agitate himself with business; so he took his shovel, and having taken the talent and wrapped it in a clean napkin (for he would treat it with respect, and hide it decorously), he deposited the napkin and the talent in the earth, and having covered it up so that no one could see traces of the burial, he went his way, and was perfectly at ease—a fair picture, indeed, of many who ought to be serving God; but they think they have little ability, and therefore do not strive even to do what they can. They are not openly sinful; they are not at all objectionable in temper or disposition—they are quiet, easy-going, good-tempered souls, but the talent, where is it? Buried! Alas, it will have a resurrection, and when it rises, all rusty from that rotting napkin, what a witness will it bear, and how will the Master say, "You wicked and slothful servant!" Some of you do not reflect enough upon that word—the Master did not say, "You wicked spendthrift!" or, "You base robber!" but, "You wicked and *slothful* servant." May not that name apply to you? The charge of sloth was quite enough. His doom was swift and terrible. The great sentence which our Lord will pronounce upon men at the last is not for doing wrong, but for not doing right. "I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me not in: naked, and you clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and you visited Me not." "Lord," they might have said, "we were not immoral or dishonest!" That is not the question; you did no service to your Lord. It is not enough to abstain from outward sin, and so to be negatively moral; unless you bring forth fruits unto righteousness, you have not the Life of God in you; and however much you may be at ease, there shall come a rough awakening to your slumbers, and the shrill sound of the archangel's trumpet shall be to you no other than the blast of the trumpet of condemnation, because you took your ease when you should have *served* your *God*.

A still more sorrowful thought burns its way across my mind. *There are many in the professing Christian Church* who are in the same state as Moab. They called to see the church officers, and asked if they could be accepted into the church. No objection was made: the pastor conversed with them; they talked very fairly, and they deceived him: they have been baptized. So often as the table of communion is spread, they sit with God's people, and partake of the emblems of the Savior's crucified body. But though their profession is a very comely one, and their outward conduct exceedingly honorable, yet they lack inward divine grace. They have the virgin's lamp, but they have no oil in the vessel with their lamps; and yet so comfortable are these professors that they slumber and sleep! I have known many a true believer much troubled for fear he should be a hypocrite, while many a hypocrite has never asked a question. Thousands who have gone safely to heaven, have, on the road, stopped many times, and put their fingers to their brow and said, "Am I a true believer? What strange perplexities arise! Have I really passed from death to life, or is it a fancy and a dream?" And yet I say to you, that the hypocrite has gone singing on his way, secure, as he thought, of passing through the

gate of pearl, until he found himself at last dragged back to the hole in the side of the hill, which is the secret gate of hell! Many, who were fair to look upon, have been rotten at the core, such fruit as the King could not accept at His table. O you who never ask whether you are Christians, begin to question yourselves; examine yourselves whether you are in the faith; let not presumption hold you in its deadly embrace. Remember, you may think yourself a believer, and everybody else may think so too, and you may fail to find out your error until it is too late to rectify it; you may persevere for years in "the way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Be you not, O you professors, like Moab, that had settled upon his lees!

Equally true is this of *the mass of moral men who are destitute of faith in Jesus.* They hear of the convictions and troubles of an awakened conscience, and they inwardly sneer at such fanaticism, and boast that they never stooped to such feelings. "Here is a man that snivels out," as they call it, "a confession of his guilt. I never was as guilty as he," cries the moralist. "I have no doubt but what it will be all right with me at last. I pay my neighbors their due; I give a guinea to a hospital when they ask me for it; I am a first-rate tradesman. Of course I have sown a few wild oats, and I still indulge a little, but who doesn't? Who dares deny that I am a good-hearted fellow?" Plainly this gentleman has not been into spiritual captivity; he has never felt the burden of sin, never known what the weight of guilt is. Do you envy him? You may sooner envy the dead in their graves because they suffer no pain. You may better envy the man who has fallen into insensibility or the wretch whose limbs are mortified—how can he feel when death has marked him for its own? Those pangs, and throes, and bitter regrets, and tossing to and fro of a wounded conscience, are signs of the dawn of spiritual life; it is by such things as these that we are led to put our trust in Jesus; and those who have never felt them, may well lament before the Lord, and pray that they may experience them—that they may be brought soundly and safely out of their self-righteousness, and led to rest upon the finished work of the dear Redeemer. Ah, my dear hearer, if you this morning have been troubled in your soul, be thankful for it. If your circumstances are full of anxiety, if you are not reconciled to God, you may be thankful for adversity, and ask that it may drive you to Jesus. If sin has become nauseous to you, if the pleasures which once satisfied your spirit have now lost their savor, if you cannot enjoy yourself with the world as you did once, I am glad of it. God loves you too well to let you build your nest here; He means to flog you out of your sins if you will not be drawn out of them by the gentler cords of His love. He is putting thorns into the nest so that the bird may mount up to heaven. Fly to your heavenly Father, as the prodigal of old, when he could not fill his belly with the husks which the swine ate. Better to suffer a present disturbance which will end in life, than enjoy the ease which is itself a protracted death. God give you to be saved through Jesus Christ.

II. We shall pause a minute and then speak to THE BELIEVER.

It is one of the most common and most dangerous of all evils that can happen to a Christian, to fall into a state of carnal security in which he grows self-confident, insensible, careless, inactive, and worldly. Beloved

in the Lord, my fellow Christians, I speak to you this morning very earnestly, the more so because I have experienced, and I fear at the present moment I am suffering from the disease of which I am about to speak to you. John Bunyan tells us that on many occasions he preached as a man in chains preaching to men in chains, that is to say, the evil which he warned them of he felt in his own soul. It is much so this morning with me; but before I plunge into the subject, let me utter one note by way of caution. These lips shall never say a word against the full assurance of faith, and against the holy confidence which the Holy Spirit gives to the people of God. You cannot be too confident in God; you cannot be too sure of your salvation, if you base that salvation upon the work of Christ; therefore, I will not speak a syllable against holy quietness and assurance forever, which are the special privileges of the elect. *The danger I am to warn you of, I will now endeavor to describe.* A Christian finds himself for a long time without any remarkable trouble: his children are spared to him, his home is happy, his business extremely prosperous—he has, in fact, all that heart can wish. When he looks round about him he can say with David, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage." Now, the danger is that he should think too highly of these secondary things, and should say to himself, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved." Some of God's children are tossed to and fro, and vexed every morning; but if we are not, the flesh will whisper, "There must be something better in me than in them. Perhaps they are chastened on account of sins which I have not fallen into; I am a special favorite." And then, though the man would never dare to put it in words, yet an indistinct feeling creeps over him that there is no need for him to be so watchful as other people; he would be sure not to fall if he were tempted, in fact, he wonders how some of his brothers and sisters can live as they do live—he is sure he could not do so. He feels that he could fight with any temptation, and come back more than a conqueror. He has grown so strong that he feels himself a Samson. He knows much more now than he used to, and thinks himself too old a bird to be caught with chaff, as he might have been some years ago. "Ah," he thinks, "I am a model Christian." He does not say as much, but that lurks in his mind. His heart is much hampered with earthly things, and his mind much bloated with self-conceit. He has not been poured from vessel to vessel; he has not been sternly tried by providence, or sorely tempted by the devil; he has not been led to question his own conversion, he has fallen into a profound calm, a deep dead, peace, a horrible lethargy, and his inmost heart has lost all spiritual energy.

The great disease of England is consumption, but I suppose it would be difficult to describe the causes and workings of consumption and decline. The same kind of disease is common among Christians. It is not that many Christians fall into outward sin, and so on, but throughout our churches we have scores who are in a spiritual consumption—their powers are all feeble and decaying. They have an unusually bright eye—they can see other people's faults exceedingly well—and sometimes they have a flush on their cheeks which looks very much like burning zeal and eminent spiritual life, but it is occasional and superficial. Vital energy is at a low ebb: they do not work for God like genuinely healthy work-

men; they do not run in the race of His commandments like athletic racers, determined to win the prize: the heart does not beat with a throb moving the entire man, as a huge engine sends the throbbing of its force throughout the whole of the machinery; they go slumbering on, in the right road it is true, but loitering in it. They serve God, but it is by the day, as we say, and not by the piece; they do not labor to bring forth much fruit—they are content with here and there a little shriveled cluster upon the topmost bough. That is the state of mind I want to describe, and it is produced in 99 out of every 100 believers by a long course of prosperity and absence of spiritual trouble.

The rapid results of this consumption are just these—a man in such a state soon gives up communion with God; it is not quite gone at first, but it is suspended. His walk with God is broken and occasional. His prayers very soon suffer. He does not forget his morning and evening devotions—perhaps, if he did, conscience would prick him, but he keeps up that form. However, he has lost the soul of prayer and only retains the shell. There is no *wrestling* prayer now. He used to rise in the night to plead with God, and he would wrestle till the tears fell fast, but it is not so now. He does pray, but not with that divine Energy which made Jacob a victor at Jabbok's brook. By degrees, his conversation is not what it used to be. He was once very earnest for Christ, and would introduce religious topics in all companies. He has become discreet now, and holds his tongue. He is quite ready to gossip about the price of wheat, and how the markets are, and the state of politics, and whether you have been to see the Sultan; but he has no words for Jesus Christ, the King in His beauty. Spiritual topics have departed from his general conversation. And now, strange to say, "The minister does not preach as he used to do." At least, the backslider says so. The reason why I think he is mistaken is that the word of God itself is not so sweet to him as it once was; and surely the Bible cannot have changed! He used to read it and feast on the promises; he used to carry a pocket Testament with him wherever he went, and take it out that he might have a sip by the way; where is his Testament now? As for going to hear the word of God now, it is dull work; he does come, he would not like to be away—if David's seat were empty, he would begin to be pricked in his conscience—he is there, but he is there in vain. There is little savor about the Word to him. Hymns which used to be delightful for their melody now tire his ears, and he is now noticing the tune, or whether somebody else sings correctly; while the prayers in which he used to join with so much fervency, are very flat to him now. He is poring over his ledger even in the house of God. These are the gray hairs which come upon a man, and sometimes, for want of self-examination, multiply rapidly, and the man knows it not till spiritual senility has come upon him. After a while, the professor slackens a good deal in his generosity; he does not think the cause of God is worth the expense that he used to spend upon it; and as to his own personal efforts to win souls, he does not give up his Sunday school class, nor his street preaching, nor distributing of tracts, perhaps, but he does all mechanically—it is mere routine. He might just as well be a robot, and be wound up, only the fault is that he is not wound up, and he does not do his

work as he should; or, if he does it outwardly, there is none of the life of God in what he does.

Do you know such a man? He who speaks to you knows him, and has wept over him. That man has sometimes been himself. I do not think I am less earnest than the most of my fellow Christians, and, indeed, I could not bear to be like some of them; but still, I am very far from being content with myself. I pray God that I may never sink down to the dishonorable depths of indolence which some Christians live in, sooner may my right hand forget her cunning, and my tongue speak no more my Master's word—I were utterly unworthy to be His minister if such were the case; but oh, I pray to be baptized in fire, and live in it as in my element, and breathe the immortal flame of zealous love to Jesus; but I cannot as I would. This heavy heart; this sluggish clay still make me move heavily when I would gladly fly as a seraph in my Master's service! Brothers and sisters, do you ever feel the same? I know some of you do, for I can see the traces of it. Very much of this sluggishness is brought on by long-continued respite from trouble—

"More the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests rolling overhead."

It would be better to be in perpetual storms, and to be driven to-and-fro in the whirlwind, and to cling to God, than to flounder at sea in the most peaceful and calm days. I would sooner be blown to pieces in battling with the devil and his crew, than be put out of commission and left to lie and rot, plank by plank, and timber by timber, in inglorious ease.

Dear friends, *the great secret danger* coming out of all this is, that when a man reaches the state of carnal security, he is ready for any evil. What heart-breaking news is sometimes brought to us who are set over the Christian church. Such-and-such a man, whom we knew as a high professor, and who has sat with us at the table of fellowship, and seemed to be greatly advanced in spiritual things, has fallen into some act of vice which is positively disgusting, from which the soul revolts; and this is the very man with whom we took sweet counsel, and went up to the house of God in company. If the history of these great offenders could be traced, it would be very much like this: they began well, but they slackened by degrees, till at last they were ripe for foul sin. We have heard of two Negroes who were accustomed to go into the bush to pray, and each of them had worn a little path in the grass. Presently one of them grew cold, and was soon found in open sin; his brother in Christ warned him that he knew it would come to that, because the grass grew on the path that led to their place of prayer. Ah, we do not know to what we may descend when we begin to go downhill! Down, down, down, is easy and pleasant to the flesh, but if we knew where it would end, we would pray God that we might sooner die than live to plunge into the terrors of that descent. Who would think that David, the man after God's own heart, would come to be the murderer of his friend Uriah, to rob him of his wife? O David, are you so near to heaven, and yet so near to hell? There is a David in every one of our hearts, and if we begin to backslide from God, we do not know to what extent we may slip. Just as in certain constitutions there is a readiness for cholera, and other pestilential disorders, through their bad state of health, so there is a state of mind in which a professor is most

likely to be betrayed into foul sin. When the seed of temptation is floating in the air, the backslider is the man who will receive it and nurture it in his soul till it brings forth evil fruit. God save us from this by His Holy Spirit!

I must pass on to observe *God's cure for this malady.* His usual way is by pouring our settled wine from vessel to vessel. If we cannot bear prosperity, the Lord will not continue it to us. *We* may pamper our children and spoil them, but the divine Father will not. If we cannot bear the sweets, He will give us the bitters. When the Lord takes down His rod—earthly parents may play at chastening their children, but God does not—He is in earnest; and I guarantee you we smart when God lays on the rod; but we make the rod ourselves; we force our Father to strike us, because we cannot be obedient and humble without it. Staying for a while in the valley of Aosta in Northern Italy, we found the air to be heavy, close, and humid with pestilential exhalations. We were oppressed and feverish—one's life did not seem worth a pin. We could not breath freely, our lungs had a sense of having a hundred atmospheres piled upon them. Presently, at midday, there came a thunderclap, attended by big drops of rain, and a stiff gale of wind which grew into a perfect tornado, tearing down the trees; then followed what the poet calls "sonorous hail," and then again the lightning flashes, and the thunder peal on peal echoing along the Alps. But how delightful was the effect, how we all went out upon the veranda to look at the lightning, and enjoy the music of the thunder! How cool the air and bracing! How delightful to walk out in the cool evening after the storm! Then you could breathe and feel a joy in life! Full often it is thus with the Christian after trouble. He has grown to be careless, lethargic, feverish, heavy, and ready to die, and just then he has been assailed by trouble, thundering threats have rolled from God's mouth, flashes of lightning have darted from providence: the property vanished, the wife died, the children were buried, trouble followed trouble, and then the man has turned to God, and though his face was wet with tears of repentance, yet he has felt his spirit to be remarkably restored. When he goes up to the house of God, it is far more sweet to hear the word than before. He could not pray before, but now he leans his head on Jesus' bosom and pours out his soul in fellowship. Eternity now exerts its heavenly attractions, and the man is saved from himself. Have you ever dreamed that you were trying to walk and could not, you felt as though you could not move a foot—and someone was about to overtake you who would do you serious mischief, and you longed to run and could not stir an inch? That is the state of mind in which we get when we would, but cannot pray, when we would, but cannot repent, when we want to believe and cannot, when we would give a world for one single tear, would almost pawn our souls to obtain a quiver of spiritual feeling, but are insensible still—

"If anything is felt, 'tis only pain
To find 'I cannot feel.'"

Do you ever sink into that petrified condition? It is horrible! Horrible indeed! Horrible! If you can be its victim and yet be happy, I tremble for you! If you see your danger, and betake yourself to earnest prayer, you shall come off more than a conqueror, but it will need more than man to

do this, it will need *God* within *us* to keep us from such a tremendous peril.

What ought we to do if we are prospering? We should remember that prevention is better than cure, and if God is prospering us, the way to prevent lethargy is—be very grateful for the prosperity which you are enjoying; do not pray for trouble—you will have it quickly enough without asking for it; be grateful for your prosperity, but make use of it. Do all you possibly can for God while He prospers you in business; try to live very closely to Him. It ought not to be so difficult for us to cling close to Jesus when providence is favorable to us. Some saints have dwelt at ease year after year, and have been all the better for it. They have had few troubles, and yet lived near to God, and why not you? If you will take care that your wealth is laid out for God, that your prosperity is spent in His service, you may have a succession of bright days. Watch the very first symptoms of declining, and fly to Christ the Great Physician. He will give you the balm of Gilead which will prevent the mischief, and you may bear the heat of prosperity as safely as the chill blasts of adversity.

But if you have fallen into such a state, I should say to you, since you cannot use a preventative, now *take to the cure*, and the one cure is the Holy Spirit. Go to the cross of Christ again, Christian, if you have fallen from your first estate, go as you hope you went at first, go with your deadness, and sloth, and lethargy, and put your trust in the precious blood, and ask the Lord Jesus to fill you with the Spirit once again, that you may be renewed. Try to get a due estimate of your indebtedness to God's divine grace, try to see the danger of your lethargy, think more of eternity and less of time. Tear yourself away a little from your worldly engagements, if possible; if you can, get a day of fasting and of prayer, certainly of prayer, but the fasting will help you to school your body as well as your soul; fetch the proud flesh down somehow—make a desperate effort. It were better for you to do this now, than for God to do it by sharp affliction. Trouble yourself that He may not trouble you, humble yourself that He may not humble you. Put away your fancied security, and by strong crying and tears, turn again to your former state of nearness to the living God. May the Lord help you, dear friends, in this!

I have thought that our text describes the state of our country just now, for we are getting into a perfect whirl of excitement, gaiety and frivolity which are leading to sad sin in high places, and this is much due to our prosperity. I hope God may never send us war or pestilence, but religion never prospers more than in troublous times. There was never an age when England was so religious as during our Civil War; perhaps no time when more people were in church in the City of London since London was London, than during the Plague, for then they all crowded to hear the gospel, and they would again if such a thing should come. We are growing nationally rich, and nationally luxurious; I fear that prophets of evil will soon be sent to us to utter bitter threats. May God have mercy upon us, pardon the horrible crimes done in the name of trade unions and at the same time teach our princes to reign in righteousness, and our great men to care less for vice and vanity, and more for the cause of the poor! I am always afraid lest this should become the state of our church too. We have had 13 years of such prosperity that we have all

wondered at it; and there is one remark that our dear friend, Jonathan George, made when this place was being built, which I have never forgotten, and which often comes up in my mind; he reminded us of this text, "You shall fear and tremble for all the good that God shall make to pass before you." We have had so much good, so many conversions, so much brotherly love, so much zeal for God, that I am always afraid lest we should fall from our present happy state; and the sure way of doing so is by ceasing to labor for God—ceasing from zeal and industry. By the way, there are many of you who do not come to the prayer meeting as you ought to do. Some of you are getting very lax at week-night services, and I know what will come when that is the case. When week-night services are badly attended, farewell to the life of godliness. If you have good excuses, I need not remind you of them, you will remember them yourselves; but many of you have no justifiable excuses—you are becoming cold and indifferent. We are very much in our position, as a church, as Esther was to the Jews. If she did not do her part, Mordecai told her, God would do it by somebody else, and put her away. And so it is with us, if we lag and loiter in work for Christ, He will put us away as a Christian church, depend upon it—not from His eternal love, for that He never will do, but from our position of honor and usefulness. May it please Him to remove me, His unworthy servant, and give me rest from my labors, before such a catastrophe as that should overwhelm us. My brothers and sisters, may we never be settled on our lees! May God always call us to fresh labor, and inspire us with new zeal; or, if He does not do that, may He send clap after clap of thundering affliction! Better that the church should lose its leaders than lose its life! Better that the pastor's coffin should be there before you, better that many should fall into poverty, than that this church should become like so many other churches—a mere sleeping place for those who need comfort, and a place for Sunday repose.

Eternal God, You who know what our heart feels; keep us from this evil, and never allow us, as a church, to become like lukewarm Laodicea, which You did spit out of Your mouth. Owing You so much, O Jesus, may we love You much in return, and be found faithful when You shall come to reward Your people, and to be glorified in Your saints. God bless us, dear friends, according to this our desire, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 32.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE RELATIONSHIP OF MARRIAGE
NO. 762

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

"Return, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married to you." Jeremiah 3:14.

THESE are dainty words—a grateful sedative for a troubled conscience. Such singular comfort is fitted to cheer the soul, and put the brightest hue on all her prospects. The person to whom it is addressed has an eminently happy position. Satan will be very busy with you, believer in Christ, tonight. He will say, "What rights have you to believe that God is married to you?" He will remind you of your imperfections, and of the coldness of your love, and perhaps of the backsliding state of your heart. He will say, "What? With all this about you, can you be presumptuous enough to claim union with the Son of God? Can you venture to hope that there will be any marriage between you and the Holy One?" He will tell you as though he were an advocate for holiness, that it is not possible that such a one as you can feel yourself to be, can really be a partaker of so choice and special a privilege as being married to the Lord. Let this suffice for an answer to all such suggestions—the text is found addressed, not to Christians in a flourishing state of heart, not to believers upon Mount Tabor, transfigured with Christ; not to a spouse all chaste and fair, and sitting under the banner of love, feasting with her lord; but it is addressed to those who are called "backsliding children." God speaks to His church in her lowest and most abject estate, and though He does not fail to rebuke her sin, to lament it, and to make her lament it too, yet still in such an estate He says to her, "I am married to you." Oh, it is divine grace that He should be married to any of us, but it is grace at its highest pitch, it is the ocean of grace at its flood-tide, that He should speak thus of "backsliding children." That He should speak in notes of love of any of the fallen race of Adam is "passing strange—'tis wonderful." But that He should select those who have behaved treacherously toward Him, who have turned their backs to Him and not their faces, who have played Him false, although, nevertheless, His own, and say unto them, "I am married to You"—this is loving-kindness beyond anything we could desire or think! Hear, O heaven, and admire, O earth, let every understanding heart break forth into singing, yes, let every humble mind bless and praise the condescension of the Most High! Cheer up poor drooping hearts. Here is sweet encouragement for some of you who

are depressed, and disconsolate, and sit alone, to draw living waters out of this well. Do not let the noise of the archers keep you back from the place of the drawing of water. Be not afraid lest you should be cursed while you are anticipating the blessing. If you do but trust in Jesus, if you have but a vital interest in the once humbled, now exalted Lord, come with holy boldness to the text and whatever comfort there is here, receive it and rejoice in it.

To this end let us attentively *consider the relationship which is here spoken of, and diligently inquire how far we are experimentally acquainted with it.*

I. IN CONSIDERING THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH IS HERE SPOKEN OF, you will observe that the affinity *of marriage, though exceedingly near of kin, is not one of birth.*

1. Marriage is not a relationship of original connection. It is contracted between two persons who may, during the early part of their lives, have been entire strangers to one another; they may scarcely have looked each other in the face except during the few months that preceded their nuptials. The families may have had no previous acquaintance; they may have lived afar off as the very poles. One may have been opulent, and in possession of vast domains, and the other may have been indigent, and reduced to straitened circumstances. Genealogies do not regulate it: disparities do not hinder it. The connection is not of natural birth but of voluntary contract or covenant. Such is the relationship which exists between the believer and his God. Whatever relation there was originally between God and man, it was stamped out and extinguished by the fall. We were aliens, strangers, and foreigners, far off from God by wicked works. We had before no relation to the Most High; we were banished from His presence as traitors to His throne, as condemned criminals who had revolted against His power. Between our souls and God there could be no communion. He is light and we are dark. He is holiness and we are sin. He is heaven, and we are far more akin to hell. In Him there is consummate greatness, and we are puny insignificance. He fills all worlds with His strength, and as for us, we are the creatures of a day, who know nothing, and who are crushed before the moth. The gulf between God and a sinner is something terrible to contemplate. There is a vast difference between God and the creature even when the creature is pure, but between God and the fallen creature—oh, where is he that shall measure the infinite leagues of distance? Where was there a means of ever bridging so terrible a chasm except the Lord Jesus had found it in His own person, and in His own passion? How could we have ever perceived the infinite design, unless it had been revealed to us as an accomplished fact by which He has reconciled us and brought us into communion with Himself, that we should be married to Him? Now, Christian, just contemplate what you were, and the degraded family to which you belonged,

that you may magnify the riches of His grace who espoused you in your low estate, and has so bound Himself with all the pledges of a husband that He says, "I am married to you." What were you? That is a black catalog of foul transgressors which the apostle gives in the first epistle to the Corinthians (6:9, 11). I forbear a recital of the filthy vices—at the end of which he says, "But you are washed, but you are sanctified." In those crimes he enumerates, many of us had a share, no, all of us! What was our father, and our father's house? What was our aim? What was our practice? What were our desires? What were our tendencies? They were earthly, downward, hellward. We were at a distance from God, and we loved that distance well. But the Lord Jesus took upon Himself our nature: upon Him the Lord did lay the iniquity of all His people. And why? Not merely to save us from the wrath to come, but that we, being lifted up out of our degradation by virtue of His atonement, and being sanctified and made meet by the power of the Spirit, should have a relationship established between us and God which was not formed by nature, but which has been achieved and consummated by astounding grace! Unto the Lord let us give thanks this night as we remember the hole of the pit from where we were dug, and call to mind the fact that now we are united to Him in ties of blood and bonds of love.

2. *Marriage union is the result of choice.* Any exceptions to this rule that might be pleaded are void in reason, because they arise from folly and transgression—there ought to be no exception. It is scarcely a true marriage at all where there has not been a choice on each side. But certainly if the Lord our God is married to us, and we are married to God, the choice is mutual. The first choice is with God. That choice was made, we believe, before the foundation of the world—

"Long before the sun's refulgent ray
Primeval shades of darkness drove,
They on His sacred bosom lay,
Loved with an everlasting love."

God never began to love His people. It were impossible for the spiritual mind to entertain so unworthy a thought. He saw them in the glass of His decrees; He foresaw them, with His eyes of prescience, in the mass of creatureship all fallen and ruined; but yet He beheld them, and pitied and loved them, elected them and set them apart. "They shall be Mine," says the Lord. Here we are all agreed; and we ought to be all agreed upon the second point, namely, that we also have chosen our God. Brothers and sisters, no man is saved against his will. If any man should say that he was saved against his will, it would be a proof that he was not saved at all; for reluctance or indifference betrays an entire alienation of all the affections of the heart. If the will is still set against God, then the whole man is proven to be at enmity with Him. By nature we did not choose God: by nature we kicked against His law, and turned aside from His

dominion. But is it not written, "My people shall be willing in the day of My power"? Do you understand how, without any violation of your free agency, God has used proper arguments and motives so as to influence your understanding? Through our understanding our will is convinced, and our souls are spontaneously drawn. Then we throw down the weapons of our rebellion, and humble ourselves at the footstool of the Most High; and now we do freely choose that which we once wickedly abhorred.

Do you, Christian, at this very hour, choose Christ with all your heart to be your Lord and Savior? If it could be put to you over again to make a choice whether you would love the world or love Christ, would you not say, "Oh, my beloved is better to me than 10,000 worlds! He fixes all my love, engrosses all my passion: I give myself up to Him most freely; He bought me with a great price; He won me with His great love; He enraptured me with His unspeakable charms, so I give myself up to Him"? Here is a mutual choice. I wish that some of our friends would forbear to make such a stand against the doctrine of God's choosing us. If they will but read Scripture with an unprejudiced mind, I am quite sure they will find it there. It always seems inexplicable to me that those who claim free will so very boldly for man should not also allow some free will to God. I suppose, my brethren would not like to have to be married to somebody whom they had not chosen, and why should Jesus Christ not have the right to choose His own bride? Why should He not set His love where He wills, and have the right to exercise, according to His own sovereign mind, that bestowment of His heart and hands which none could by any means deserve? This know, that He will have His own choice whether we impugn the doctrine or not; for He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. At the same time, I wish that those friends, who believe this truth of God, would receive the other, which is quite as true. We choose Christ in return and that without any violation of our free agency. Some people cannot see two truths at one time; they cannot understand that God has made all the truths of God to be double. Truth is many-sided. While divine predestination is true, human responsibility is also true; while it is true that Christ chooses us, it is also true that the unrenewed mind will not choose Him—"You will not come unto Me, that you might have life." This is the sin and the condemnation of man, that "light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Settle it, however, in your minds that when God says, "I am married to you," it implies that there is a blessed choice on both sides; and so it is a true marriage.

3. Our third reflection is that *marriage is cemented by mutual love.* Where there is not this mutual affection, it deserves not the name of marriage. The dark shadow of a blessing they cannot realize must be a

heavy load for either heart to bear; but where there is true and genuine love it is the sweetest and happiest mode of living. It is one of the blessings of paradise which has been preserved to us after the fall. Without love, wedded life must be a very purgatory above ground. In the solemn contract which has brought our souls this night to God, the marriage is sustained, cemented, strengthened, and made delightful by mutual love. Need I talk to you of the love of God? It is a theme we are scarcely competent to talk of. You need to sit down and weep about it for very joy, joy which fills the heart, and makes the eyes overflow, but well near chains the tongue, for it is a deep, profound, and inexpressible. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us." "As the Father has loved Me, even so have I loved you." Oh, the love of God—it would surpass the powers of an angel to set it forth. Sure, sure, it shall be the blest employment of eternity's long ages for us to comprehend it; and, perhaps, when myriads of ages have rolled over our happy souls, we shall still be as much struck with wonder with it as we were at first. The marvel does not diminish on inspection: familiarity cannot make it common. The nearer we approach, the deeper our awe. It will be as great a surprise that God should love such cold, such faithless, and such unworthy beings as us at the end of 10,000 years as it was at first—perhaps more so. The more thoroughly we shall know ourselves, the more fully we shall understand the Good of the Lord; thus will our wonder grow and swell. Even in heaven we shall be lost in surprise and admiration at the love of God to us. The rapture will augment the reverence we feel.

Well, but, beloved brothers and sisters, I trust we also love Him in return! Do you never feel one soft affection rising after another as you muse on the Christ of God? When you sometimes listen to a sermon in which the Savior's dear affection to you is set forth, do you not feel the tears wet your cheeks? Does not your heart swell sometimes, as if it were unable to hold your emotions? Is there not a "joy unspeakable and full of glory" that comes over you? Can you not say?—

"Jesus, I love Your charming name,
'Tis music to my ears;
Gladly would I sound it out so loud
That earth and heaven should hear"?

I hope you do not need to sing tonight—

"'Tis a point I long to know,"

but I trust, that in the solemn silence of your souls you can say, "You know that I love You," grieved that the question should be asked, but still ready to answer, with Peter, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You." Now, it is impossible for you to love God without the strong conclusive evidence that God loves you. I once knew a good woman who was the subject of many doubts, and when I got to the bottom of her

doubt, it was this—she knew she loved Christ, but she was afraid He did not love her. "Oh," I said, "that is a doubt that will never trouble me; never, by any possibility, because I am sure of this, that the heart is so corrupt, naturally, that love to God never did get there without God's putting it there." You may rest quite certain, that if you love God, it is a fruit, and not a root. It is the fruit of God's love to you, and did not get there by the force of any goodness in you. You may conclude, with absolute certainty, that God loves you if you love God. There never was any difficulty on His part. It always was on your part, and now that the difficulty is gone from you, none whatever remains. O let our hearts rejoice and be filled with great delight, because the Savior has loved us and given Himself for us. So let us realize the truth of the text, "I am married to you."

4. My fourth observation is that *this marriage necessitates certain mutual relations.* I cannot say "duties," for the word seems out of place on either side. How can I speak of the great God making pledges of faithfulness? And yet with reverence, let me word it so, for in any vocabulary I hardly have words to set it forth. When God becomes a Husband, He undertakes to do a husband's part. When He says, "Your Maker is your husband," you may rest assured that He does not take the relationship without assuming (well, I must say it) all the responsibilities which belong to that condition. It is the part of God to nourish, to cherish, to shield, to protect, to bless those with whom He condescends, in infinite mercy, to enter into union. When the Lord Jesus Christ became the husband of His church, He felt that He was under an engagement to us, and inasmuch as there were debts incurred, He paid them—

"Yes, said the Son, with her I'll go,
Through all the depths of sin and woe;
And on the cross will even dare
The bitter pains of death to bear."

He never shrunk from the doing of any of those loving works which belong to the husband of his chosen spouse. He exalted the word "husband," and made it to be fuller of meaning than it had ever been before, so that the apostle could see it glittering in a new light, and could say, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it."

Oh yes, dear friends, there is a responsibility arising out of this relationship, and He of whom we speak has not departed from it! You know He has not. And now, what about *our* side? The wife has to reverence her husband, and to be subject unto him in all things. That is precisely our position towards Him who has married us. Let His will be our will. Let His wish be our law. Let us not need to be flogged to service, but let us say—

"'Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move."

O Christian, if the Master condescends to say, "I am married to you," you will not any longer ask, "What is my duty?" but you will say, "What can I do for You?" The loving wife does not say, "What is my duty?" and stand coldly questioning how far she should go, and how little she may do, but all that she can do for him who is her husband she will do, and everything that she can think of, everything she can devote herself to, in striving to please him in all things, she will most certainly do and perform. And you and I will do the same if we have realized our union with Christ. O beloved, do not grow sentimental and waste your energies in driveling fancies as some have done. Speak you of a wife?—where the family is large, the work is heavy, and the responsibility great. I could gladly remind you here, did time permit, of the words of King Lemuel, and the prophecy that his mother taught him. Bear with me at least while I admonish you to such a one, that the heart of your husband may safely trust in you. Let it be your care to give meat to your household. Lay your hands to the spindle; suffer not your industry to fail; eat not the bread of idleness. Stretch out your hand to the poor, and reach forth both your hands to the needy. Open your mouth with wisdom and in your tongue be the law of kindness. Yes, and consider this with yourself, that in your regard for all the duties of your station, you are fulfilling your bounden obligations to your Lord. Short words, but mighty, matchless deeds have told how Jesus loved us. Be it ours to carve our song of love to Him on the hearts of some tender nurslings who are cast in our way, and committed to our care. O that the life I now live in the flesh, by faith in the Son of God, might become a poem, and a grateful response to Him who loved me, and gave Himself for me. I hope we do know, then, that when God says, "I am married to you," it necessitates mutual relations.

5. Fifthly, *it also involves mutual confidences.* How shall we call that a marriage where the husband and wife are still two persons, maintaining individuality as if it were a scrupulous condition of the contract? That is utterly foreign to the divine idea. In a true marriage, the husband and wife become one. Therefore their joys and their cares, their hopes and their labors, their sorrows and their pleasures, rise and blend together in one stream. Brothers and sisters, the Lord our God has said it, "The secret of the Lord is with them who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." "Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world?" There was the secret, because there is a union between Christ and His people which there is not between Christ and the world. How joyously do the words sound—they have a silvery ring in them—"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." Christ keeps nothing back from you. Remember another word of His—"If it were not so, I would have told you." Oh, how delightful! He

says, "I go to prepare a place for you." He tells them that He is going to prepare a place for them, and then He says, "If it were not so, I would have told you—I keep no secrets back from you; you are near Me, My flesh and My bones. I left My Father's house in glory, that I might become one with you, and manifest Myself to you, and I keep back nothing from you, but reveal My very heart and My very soul to you."

Now, Christian, just look—you stand in the relation of a spouse, and you must tell your very heart out to Christ. No, do not go and tell it to your neighbors, nor your friends, for, somehow or other, the most sympathizing heart cannot enter into all our griefs. There is a grief which the stranger cannot intermeddle with; but there never was a pang into which Christ could not enter. Make a confidant of the Lord Jesus—tell Him all. You are married to Him; play the part of a wife who keeps no secrets back, no trials back, no joys back—tell them all to Him. I was in a house yesterday where there was a little child, and it was said to me, "He is such a funny child." I asked in what way, and the mother said, "Well, if he tumbles down and hurts himself in the kitchen, he will always go upstairs crying and tell somebody, and then he comes down and says, 'I told somebody.' And if he is upstairs he goes down and tells somebody, and when he comes back it is always, 'I told somebody,' and he does not cry any more." Ah, well, I thought, we must tell somebody: it is human nature to want to have sympathy, but if we would always go to Jesus, and tell Him all, and there leave it, we might often dismiss the burden, and be refreshed with a grateful song. Let us do so, and go with all our joys and all our troubles unto Him, who says, "I am married to you." I know the devil will say, "Why, you must not tell the Lord your present trouble: it is too insignificant, and besides, you know you did wrong and brought it upon yourself." Well, but you would tell your husband, would you not? And will you not tell your Lord? You could not tell a master, but you can tell a husband. Oh, do not go back into the old legal state of calling Christ Baali, but call Him Ishi, "My man, my husband," and put that confidence in Him which it is expected that the wife should place in a husband who dearly loves her.

6. We must go on to a sixth point. *This marriage implies fellowship in all its relations.* Whatever a husband possesses becomes his wife's. She cannot be poor if he is rich; and what little she has, whatever it may be, comes to him. If she is in debt, her debts become his. When Jesus Christ took His people, He gave them all He had. There is nothing which Christ has which He has not given to us. It is noteworthy that He has given His church His own name! "Where?" you ask. Well, there are two passages in Jeremiah that most remarkably illustrate this (23:6 and 33:16). In the one it says, "This is the name whereby He shall be called," and in the other, "This is the name wherewith she shall be called." In both, the name is identical. "Jehovah Tsidkenu: The Lord our righteousness."

What? "She shall be called"? Yes, as though He said, "She shall take My name," and with the name, of course, the entire open acknowledgment of His interest in her and her interest in Him. As such she is partaker of all His glory: if He is a king, she is a queen; if He is in heaven, "He has raised us up together, and made us to sit in heavenly places with Him." If He is heavenly, she also shall bear the image of the heavenly; if He is Immortal, so shall she be; and if He is at the right hand of the Father, so shall she be also highly exalted with Him.

Now, it is saying but very little when I add, that, therefore, whatever *we* have, belongs to Him—oh, it is so little, so very little, but one wishes it were more! "O that Christ were not so glorious as He is," I have sometimes thought. It was half a wicked wish, but I meant it well, that I might help to glorify Him. O that He were still poor, that one might ask Him to a feast! O that He were still in this world, that one could break the alabaster box of ointment and pour it on His head! But You are so great, most blessed Master, that we can do nothing to increase You! You are so high, we cannot exalt You! You are so happy, that we cannot bless You! Yet, what am I saying? It is all a mistake! He is still here; He calls every one of His people "Members of His body," and if you wish to enrich Him, help the poor; if you want to feed Him, feed the hungry; they who bind garments about the naked, put vestures upon the Lord Himself. "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me." I hope we can sing without falsehood that verse of Dr. Watts'—

"And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I could give Him all."

7. A seventh observation, and then I shall refrain from dwelling longer on this point. *The very crown of marriage is mutual delight and complacency.* The wife of a Persian nobleman, having gone to a feast which was given by the great Darius, was asked by her husband whether she did not think that Darius was the finest man in the world. No, she said, she did not think so; she never saw anyone in the world who was comparable to her husband. And doubtless that is just the opinion which a husband forms of his wife, and a wife of her husband where the marriage is such as it should be. Now, certainly Christ sets a very high store upon us. I remember turning over that passage in Solomon's Song, looking at it and wondering how it could be true—believing it, and yet not being able to comprehend it—where Christ says, "You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you!" Oh, what eyes He must have! We say that love is blind; but that cannot be true in Christ's case, for He sees all things. Why, this is how it is: He sees Himself in us. He does not see us as we are, but in His infinite grace He sees us as we are to be, as Kent sings—

"Not as she stood in Adam's fall,
When sin and ruin covered all;
But as she'll stand another day,
Brighter than sun's meridian ray."

The sculptor says he can see a bust in a block of marble, and that all he has to do is to chip away the extra marble, and let the bust appear. So Christ can see a perfect being in every one of us, if we are His people; and what He is doing with us day by day is taking off the warts, making us to be like Himself. He can see us as we shall one day be before the throne of God in heaven, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Ah, beloved, He sets great store by us! His delights are with the sons of men. He loves to hear our praise, and to listen to our prayer. The songs of His people are His sweet perfume, and communion with His people is like the beds of spices, the beds of lilies, where He feeds. And as for us, who are His people, I am sure we can say that there is no delight which can equal communion with Christ. We have tried other delights—shame upon us! We have tried some of them, but after having done so, we find that there is nothing like our Lord, "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity," says the preacher," but when we come to Christ, we find no vanity there, but can truly say—

"Where can such sweetness be
As I have tasted in Your love,
As I have found in Thee?"

The Christian's heart is like Noah's dove—it flies over the wide waste, and cannot rest the soles of its feet until it comes back to Christ! He is the true Noah, who puts out His hand and takes in the weary dove, and gives it rest. There is no peace the whole world over but with Christ—

"There's no such thing as pleasure here,
My Jesus is my all;
As You do shine or disappear,
My pleasures rise or fall."

Thus much, then, by way, as it were, of skimming the surface of this delightful word, "I am married to you."

II. I have only a little time for the second point. HOW FAR DO YOU AND I EXPERIMENTALLY UNDERSTAND THIS?

I am afraid some of you think me half crazy tonight. You are saying, "Well, I do not understand this; what is the man talking about? God married to us! Christ married to us! I do not understand it!" God have mercy upon you, my poor hearer, and bring you to know it! But let me tell you, if you did but know it, there is a secret here that would make you a thousand times more happy than all the joys of the world can ever make you! You remind me of the rooster in the fable, who found a diamond on the dunghill, and as he turned it over, he said, "I would rather have found a grain of barley." That was according to his nature. And so with you; this precious pearl of union to God will seem to be nothing to

you—a little worldly pleasure will be more to your taste. One could weep to think there should be such ignorance of true joy and true delight! Oh, blind eyes that cannot see beauty in the Savior! Oh, stone-cold hearts that can see no loveliness in Him! Jesus! They are drunk; they are mad who cannot love You! It is a strange infatuation of the sons of men to think that they can do without You, that they can see any light apart from You, the Sun of Righteousness, or anything like beauty in all the gardens of the world apart from You, the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley! O that they knew You!—

"A thousand sorrows pierce my soul,
To think that all are not Your own."

Do I address any tonight, who, while they pretend to be religious people, hold loosely by their allegiance to the Lord? There are many such, and we occasionally meet with them here. They cannot appease their conscience without some show of profession, so they join with us as hearers and spectators in the solemn assembly; but they never unite with the church because they have not devotedly yielded up their hearts to Christ. Ask them the reason, and their answer sounds modest, and yet the reserve it implies is anything but chaste. Do you tell us that you are afraid you should not walk consistently? Would it not be more true to admit that your relationship with the world, your service of mammon, your ordinary pastimes, and your occasional revelries, harmless as you try to persuade yourselves they are, if viewed in the light of marriage to Christ, must be accounted as very shame? So far as the principles of Christianity are concerned, you endorse them with your private creed, and you are "Protestant" enough to prefer the most evangelical doctrines; but the reserve in your conduct is a clear index to a most fatal reserve in your character. You might admit God to be the supreme, but not the exclusive Lord of your heart. You would give the Lord's altar more honor than any other altar, but still you would not remove the high places which desecrate the land. Your opinion is that there is no god in all the earth but the God of Israel, yet your practice is to bow down in the house of Rimmon. You wish to have all the promises of God vouchsafed to you, but you decidedly object to make any vows in His sanctuary. It is to such as you that these delicate appeals are most distasteful, "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married to you." Nothing in your experience responds to this. You stand aloof as if you were grieved. I must warn you, therefore, that God can be your God only in these bonds of covenant union. But, Christian, I speak to you. Surely you know something about this, that God is married to you? If you do, can you not say with me, "Yes, and He has been a very faithful husband to me"? Now, there is no one of you who can object to that! Thus far He has been very faithful to you, and what have you been to Him? How kind and tender has He been; how faithful, how generous, how sympathizing! In your eve-

ry affliction He has been afflicted, and the angel of His presence has saved you. Just in your extremity He has come to your rescue. He has carried you through every difficulty, even until now! Oh, you can speak well of Him, can you not? And as for His love, Christian, as for His love, what do you think of that? Is it not heaven on earth to you? Do you not reckon it to be—

"Heaven above
To see His face, to taste His love"?

Well, then, speak well of Him, speak well of Him! Make this world hear His praise! Ring that silver bell in the deaf ears of this generation! Make them know that your beloved is the fairest of the fair, and compel them to inquire, "O you fairest among women, what is your beloved more than another beloved?"

As for you who do not know Him, I should like to ask you this question, and you answer it for yourselves. Do you want to be married to Christ? Do you wish to have Him? Oh, then there will be no difficulties in the way of the match! If your heart goes after Christ, He will have you. If, when you get home to your bedside, you say to Him, "Dear Savior, here is my heart, take it, wash it, save me," He will hear you. Whoever you may be, He will not refuse you. Oh, He seeks you, He seeks you; and when *you* seek Him that is a sure sign that He has found you! Though you may not have found Him, yet He has found you already! The wedding ring is ready. Faith is the golden ring which is the token of the marriage bond. Trust the Savior! Trust Him! Have done with trusting to your good works. Have done with depending upon your merits. Take His works, His merits, and rest alone upon Him, for now does He say to you, "I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness—and you shall know the Lord."

So may He do unto every one of you, and may Christ's name be glorified forever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JEREMIAH 3.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

SONGS OF DELIVERANCE
NO. 763

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 28, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"They who are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they recount the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of His villages in Israel: then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates."
judges 5:11.

DEBORAH sang concerning the overthrow of Israel's enemies, and the deliverance granted to the tribes: we have a far richer theme for music; we have been delivered from worse enemies, and saved by a greater salvation. Let our gratitude be deeper; let our song be more jubilant. glory be unto God, we can say that our sins which were like mighty hosts, have been swept away, not by that ancient river, the river Kishon, but by streams which flowed from Jesus' side. Our great enemy has been overcome, and his head is broken. Not Sisera, but Satan has been overthrown: the "Seed of the woman has bruised his head" forever. We are now ransomed from the galling yoke; we walk at liberty through the power of the great Liberator, the Lord Jesus.

The results which accrued from the conquest achieved by Barak are upon a small scale similar to those which come to us through the deliverance worked out by the Lord Jesus Christ. I shall take our text and spiritualize it, viewing its joyous details as emblematic of the blessings granted to us through our redeemer. Those who went to draw water at the wells after Barak's victory, were no longer disturbed by the robbers who lurked at the fountains for purposes of plunder; and instead of drawing the water by stealth and in hasty fear, the women joined their voices around the wellhead, and sang of the mighty acts of God; and the citizens who had been cooped up within the town walls, and dared not show themselves in the suburbs, ventured beyond the gates into the open country, transacted their business openly, and enjoyed the sweets of security. I think we can readily see that this is an instructive type of the condition into which our Lord Jesus Christ has brought us, through the destruction of our sins and the overthrow of the powers of darkness.

We shall, this morning, first, for a little time, think of *the wells of salvation as cleared of enemies;* then we shall talk together upon *the songs of praise to be rehearsed at the wells;* and thirdly we shall have a little to say upon *the visitation of the gates, which we can now enjoy with safety.*

I. Our text tells us of WELLS CLEARED FROM THE FOE and speaks of those who "are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water."

We thank God that *we who are the children of the Most High, have wells to go to.* The world is a wilderness; say what we will of it, we cannot

make it into anything else. "This is not our rest; it is polluted." We are passing through the desert of earth to the promised land of heaven, and we praise God that we have wells to drink of on the road. As Israel drank at Elim, and as the patriarchs drank at Beersheba, so have we wells of salvation out of which we joyfully draw the living water. Our great inexhaustible well is the *Lord Jesus Christ.* He is, indeed, the great "deep that lies under," the "deep that couches beneath," the secret spring and source from which the crystal streams of life flow, through the wells of instrumentality and ordinance. "All my fresh springs are in You." Whenever we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, we drink and are refreshed. No thirst can abide where He is. "He who drinks of the water that I shall give him," He says, "shall never thirst." glory be to His name, we know the truth of this—

"I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him."

As often as we muse upon His person, commune with Him in holy fellowship, think of His wounds, triumph in His ascension, and long for His second advent, so often does our spirit drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, and we lift up our head.

Arising out of this greatest fountain, we have wells from which we draw the waters of comfort. First there is *this book*, this golden book, this book of God, the word of God with its thousands of promises, suitable to every case, applicable to all seasons, faithful and true, yes and Amen in Christ Jesus! Oh, how frequently, when we have been fainting and ready to die, we have found that promise true, "I will pour water upon him who is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground!" When we have turned to the word, and searched there and found the promise, and fed upon it, as one that finds great spoil we have rejoiced in God's word. The doctrines of this book are inexpressibly reviving to us. He who understands them shall find them to be a well of life and comfort. I need not instance those doctrines, for you know them, you feed upon them; they are your daily bread. Beloved, when we think of God's eternal love to His people, when we meditate upon redemption by blood, when we consider the truth of effectual calling by the Holy Spirit, when we remember the immutable faithfulness of the Most High, the covenant suretyship of our Lord Jesus, when we look forward to the perfection which will be ultimately ours, and to the haven of eternal rest to which every one of the Lord's people shall be brought, we do indeed find that—

"Here in the fair gospel-field,
Wells of free salvation yield
Streams of life, a plenteous store,
And our soul shall thirst no more."

As the word read is thus precious, so is the *word preached.* If we listen to one whom God helps to speak in His name, we shall often find ourselves returning from the place of worship in a very different state from that in which we entered it. How often have you lost your burdens when you have been sitting in the assembly of the Saints! I know, you feeble ones, you have oftentimes been refreshed; you have bowed yourselves

down to Siloah's brook that flows hard by the oracle of God, and as you drank of its cooling streams, you have felt as though you could face the enemy once more, and go back to a world of toil and trouble, strong for labor, and patient for the endurance of suffering. Happy are you to whom the word has come with demonstration of the Spirit and with divine power. The fruitful lips of the preacher who speaks experimentally, who speaks clearly, who speaks of that which he has tasted and handled of the good word of truth—those sanctified lips, I say, "drop as the rain," and "distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb." The mouth of the righteous becomes a well of life to the people of God.

So, my brothers and sisters, it is also with the well of the *ordinances*. I think we shall never forget the time when we drew water out of the well of baptism—when we were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, upon our profession of faith. We found believers' immersion to be a most instructive emblem of our death, burial, and resurrection with the Lord Jesus; and we have not forgotten, to this day, that we then avowed ourselves to be dead to the world, dead to the law, dead to self, dead *with* Christ; nor has the thought of resurrection with Jesus, as typified by the uplifting out of the pool, been forgotten by us. We know and feel that we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, and we rejoice that He "has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The recollection of that happy day when we gave ourselves up publicly and unreservedly to Jesus, is still fragrant. Oh, how sweet to sing humbly but heartily!—

"'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."

So with the Lord's Supper; my witness is, and I think I speak the mind of many of God's people now present, that coming as some of us do, weekly, to the Lord's table, we do not find the breaking of bread to have lost its significance—it is always fresh to us. I have often remarked on Lord's-day evening, whatever the subject may have been, whether Sinai has thundered over our heads, or the plaintive notes of Calvary have pierced our hearts, it always seems equally appropriate to come to the breaking of bread. Shame on the Christian church that she should put it off to once a month, and mar the first day of the week by depriving it of its glory in the meeting together for fellowship and breaking of bread, and showing forth of the death of Christ till He come. They who once know the sweetness of each Lord's-day celebrating His Supper, will not be content, I am sure, to put it off to less frequent seasons. Beloved, when the Holy Spirit is with us, ordinances are wells to the Christian—wells of rich comfort and of near communion!

But I must not forget *the mercy seat.* What a well that is to the Christian when he can draw near unto God with true heart! It is a glorious thing to have such a well as that in the family, where, in prayer with the children, you can bring all the necessities of the household before God, and mention each child if you will, and all the troubles of the past, or all the expected difficulties of the coming day. Let us never give up that well.

But, as for private prayer, brothers and sisters, this world would be dreary indeed if we could not pour out our sorrows into our Father's ear. This is the poor man's riches; this is the sick man's medicine; this is the faint man's cordial; this is the weak one's strength; this is the ignorant man's school; this is the strong man's confidence. Neglect prayer, and you will soon discover that all your spiritual powers wax weak; but be much in supplication—and he who is mighty on his knees, is mighty everywhere. He who looks God in the face every morning, will never fear the face of man; and he who looks Christ in the face each evening, may well close his eyes in sweet repose, feeling that if he should never wake to this world of care, he shall wake up in the likeness of his Lord. Oh, yes, the mercy seat is a well of refreshment indeed! Over and above this, *every form of fellowship* with Jesus worked in us by the Spirit, is a well of salvation. This is an unknown thing to the ungodly; he enters not into this secret. But you, my fellow Christians, know what communion with God means, for oftentimes, even when we are in business, or taken up with the world's cares, our hearts are away with our beloved on the mountains of myrrh and in the beds of spices; we get away from the world's toils to lean our head upon His bosom, to sit in His banqueting house, and see the love banner waving over our heads. Beloved, we are no strangers to Jesus Christ, blessed be His name, and He is no stranger to us; we have seen Him through the lattices of the ordinances; we have found the means of divine grace to be like windows of agate and gates of carbuncle, through which we have beheld Him; we have Him in our hearts full often, He embraces our soul—we carry the fire of His love flaming on the altar of our affections. He is our dear companion, our ever present help in time of trouble.

Thus have I mentioned some of the wells; now, concerning them all, it may be said, *that they can never be stopped up by our foes.* We read that in old times the enemies stopped up the wells, but neither hell nor its infernal train can ever fill up one of the wells which the Lord has dug and filled by His Spirit. If outward ordinances are stopped, yet the great deep that lies under will find a vent somewhere; and if we were forbidden to draw near to the Lord's table, or to meet to listen to the word, yet, blessed be God, we could pray, And we could have secret fellowship with Jesus, and so the wells could not so be stopped that the thirsty Christian should be deprived of his drink in due season.

Moreover, as they cannot be stopped, so *neither can they be taken away from us.* The Philistine king, Abimelech, strove with Abraham and with Isaac to take away the wells; but these are ours by covenant engagements; these are given to us in the eternal council; they are guaranteed to us by the solemn league of the eternal Three; and none of these covenant blessings shall be taken from the heirs of life, who are heirs of all things in Christ Jesus.

Though these fountains cannot be stopped up or taken away, yet we can be molested in coming near to them. It seems that archers and wells frequently go together. It was the blessing of Joseph—"Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well whose branches run over the

wall." But what next? "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him." And so in the text: here are wells, but there is the noise of archers, which greatly disturbs those who go to draw water. Brothers and sisters—I think you know, but I will refresh your memories—you know what the noise of archers has been to you when you have tried to draw water. Years ago, with some of us, *our sins were the archers* that shot at us when we would gladly come to Christ and drink of His salvation. When we bowed the knee in prayer, a fiery arrow would dart into our hearts—"How dare *you* pray? God hears not *sinners!"* When we read the word of God, another barbed shaft would be shot against us—"What have *you* to do with God's word? There can be no promise there for such as *you* are. Don't you know that you are a condemned sinner, and that book curses you solemnly? Turn away from it; of what service can it be to you?" Do you not remember how you used to come up to this house sighing for comfort, and though the preacher frequently invited you to Christ, and tried to exhibit a crucified Savior before your eyes, yet the noise of the archers prevented you drawing from the well? Arrow after arrow of remorse, conviction, terror, and alarm, pierced your soul, so that you could not obtain peace with God. You used to envy the very least of the Lord's people when you saw them rejoicing in Christ, while you could not so much as hope yourself. You were told to believe, but faith seemed impossible to you. You were bid to rest upon the finished work, but you only could say, "I would, but cannot trust." The twanging of the bow and the whizzing of the shaft were a terrible noise which prevented all drawing of water; while sometimes Satan beat the big hell drum in your ears—"The wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come!" And as you thought about the judgment day, and the great white throne, and the resurrection, and the dividing of the sheep from the goats, and the "Depart, you cursed," and the everlasting fire, and all the terrors of a dread eternity, divested of every beam of hope, it seemed impossible for you to draw water out of any one of the wells, though perhaps you tried them all, and tried them again and again, as I did, year after year, and yet you could not obtain so much as a single drop to cool your parched tongue, while it seemed as if it would cleave to the roof of your mouth in utter despair. Ah, but beloved, you are delivered from the noise of archers now; your sins, which are many, are forgiven you; now you can come to Jesus, now you can come to the ordinances, now you can read the Bible, now you can hear the word, and you find that God's paths drop fatness. There is to you a river, the streams of which make glad all your powers. Oh, how precious, now, these wells have become, because you can in unmolested peace, draw water; and though sometimes the devil would gladly shoot at you, yet you know you have a glorious shield, who is the Lord's anointed, and has turned away all wrath from you, so that none can lay anything to your charge, for you are accepted in the beloved, justified by faith, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ! Will not you who are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, bless the Lord?

But I should not wonder if since that first race of archers called sins has died out, some of you have been much molested by another tribe of archers who trouble me a great deal at times, namely, the archers called *doubts* and *fears*. These sad villains will, if they can, attack every soul that desires to enjoy the means of divine grace and the grace of the means. "Ah," says Satan, even to God's child, "remember your slips and your failures! Remember your shortcomings, your slackness in prayer, your indifference to God's glory, your hardness of heart! How can you think of receiving a divine promise?" Just as you are going to grasp some divine word out of your Bible and suck out its honey, it seems as though something strikes your hand, and you are obliged to drop the text altogether, lest you should be acting presumptuously. No hymn of joyful assurance suited you, but you began moaning out—

"'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?"

It is poor work coming to the Lord's table when you are afraid that you are none of His; it is wretched work even listening to the ministry when you dare not claim the precious things which are delivered; yes, and even the word of God is a comfortless book when you cannot feel that you have a saving interest in its promises. Yet I thank God, when our faith is in exercise, and our hope is clear, that we can see our interest in Christ; we come to Him just as we came at first, and cast ourselves wholly upon Him. Then we no longer fear the archers, but are rid of every fear; we "know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him," and, no longer disturbed by our enemies, we sit by the well's brink, and are refreshed.

Yet I should not wonder if another band of archers has sometimes attacked you when you have been at the wells, namely, *your cares*. Dear mother, the thought of the children at home, has frequently disturbed your devotions in the assembly of the Saints. Good friend, engaged in business, you do not always find it easy to put a hedge between Saturday and Sunday. The cares of the week will stray into the sacred enclosure of the day of rest, and thus the cruel archers worry you. Yes, and perhaps in the case of those of us who are engaged in God's work, even our solemn engagements enlist against us a set of archers unknown to others; I mean anxieties about the right conducting of services, and arranging the various departments of the church. We become, like Martha, cumbered with much serving, even though we are serving the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and this deprives us of the delightful sitting at His feet, which is heaven below. It is well to be able to cast all our cares on Him who cares for us, and thus, by an act of faith in our heavenly Father, to be delivered from the noise of these archers.

One thing you have, dear friends, for which you cannot be too thankful, namely, you have a deliverance from the archers of *ecclesiastical discord.* We have peace within our borders. We have not this bickering and that division, we are not divided brother against brother, as some of our churches are, which are rent by schisms, torn in pieces by stripes, which

might well cause them great searching of heart; when we come together, we come to edify one another in peace, for we love each other in the Lord. We have not to lament that the house of God is a place of our sorest wounding; it is to us a place of rest—where our best friends, our kindred dwell, where God, our Savior, reigns. We are delivered from that noise of archers at church meetings; and you who know how sharply some can shoot, may well be glad of rest.

Again, we are happily delivered from *political persecutions.* We have not to set scouts upon the mountains, as the covenants of old, when they met in some lonely glen for worship. We have not to put one of the deacons at the door to warn us when the constables were coming to arrest us, as the members of this very church did according to our records, in years gone by. The minister has not to escape and hide himself from the officers, and the members have no need to hasten to their homes like scattered sheep hunted by the wolf in the form of an armed band, but by God's grace, every man under his own vine and fig tree we sit, none making us afraid, for which we are not thankful enough, I am quite sure. May God grant that, remembering our peaceful privileges in being now screened from persecutions, from ecclesiastical troubles, from carnal cares, from inward doubts, and above all, from the plague of sin, we may be like those who in the days of Deborah were delivered from the noise of archers in the places of the drawing of water.

Enough upon that only make sure that you express your gratitude to your gracious God. This reminding you of your mercies I am afraid is dull work to some of you, but if you had them taken away, you would think differently. One might almost sigh for a brush of persecution to wake some of you up! Just a little salt cast here and there to make some of the sore places smart! Surely we go to sleep unless the whip is now and then laid on us. A stake or two at Smithfield might once again give back the old fire of enthusiasm to the church, but in these warm sunny days we forget our mercies. We go to sleep upon the bench instead of tugging at the oar; and when we ought to be serving God with all our might and soul, I fear that the most of us who are saved are dreaming our lonely way to heaven, indifferent to a very great extent to the glory of God, and forgetful of our indebtedness to Christ for what He has done for us.

II. Now we turn the subject, and come secondly to notice THE SONGS BY THE WELL.

As when the people came to the wells of old, they were apt to talk with one another if all was peaceful, so when we come up to the ordinances of God's house, and enjoy fellowship with Jesus, we should not spend our time in idle chat, but we should rehearse the works of the Lord. In Deborah's day, when one friend came to the well and met another, and half-a-dozen gathered together, one would say, "Delightful change, this! We could not come to the well a month ago without being afraid that an arrow would pierce our hearts." "Ah," said another, "our family went without water for a long time. We were all bitten with thirst because we dared not come to the well." Then, another would say, "But have you heard how it is? It was that woman, the wife of Lapidoth, Deborah, who called out

Barak, and went with him to the battle. Have you not heard of the glorious fight they had, and how the river Kishon swept Jabin away, and Jael smote Sisera through the temples?" "The Lord has done it," said another. "It was the Lord's doing, and is it not marvelous in our eyes?" And so, around the well's brink, when they were delivered from the noise of archers, they recounted the works of God; and before they wended their way to their several homes, they said one to another, "Let us sing unto the praise of God who has set our country free," and so, catching the tune, each woman went back to her village home bearing the pitcher for her household, and singing as she went. This is very much what *we* ought to do. When we come together, we ought to recount the work that Jesus Christ has done for us, the great work which He did on Calvary; the great work which He is doing now, as he stands before the Father's throne. We should talk experimentally, and tell one another of what we have known, what Christ has done for us; through what troubles we have been sustained; in what perils we have been preserved; what blessings we have enjoyed; what ills, so well deserved, have been averted from us. We have not enough of this recounting the works of the Lord. It was a sign of the saints in the olden times, that "They who feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard." O let us get back to that primitive simplicity of conversation, and let us recount, as the text says, the righteous acts of Jehovah; let us go through our recounting for the grand orchestra of the skies. Let us begin to praise God and stir each other up to gratitude here, that we may be getting ready to join the overwhelming hallelujah with the ten thousands times ten thousands who forever praise God and the Lamb. Around all the wells, whichever they may be, of which we drink, let our conversation be concerning Christ and His dying love; concerning the Holy Spirit and His conquering power; concerning the providence of God, and its goodness, and its faithfulness; and then, as we wend our way to our different homes, let us go with music in our hearts, and music on our lips, to take music to our households, each man and woman magnifying the name of the Lord!

Did you observe carefully of what it was they sang? "The acts of the Lord." But there is an adjective appended, "The *righteous* acts of the Lord." Righteousness is that attribute which the carnal man fears but he who sees the righteousness of God satisfied by the atonement of Christ, is charmed even by the severe aspect of God dressed as a judge. The justified child of God is not afraid of the righteousness of God, for he can meet all its demands. He likens it to the golden lions which stood in pairs upon the steps of the throne of Solomon—not meant to drive away the petitioner, but to let him see how strong and powerful was that throne upon which Israel leaned. I see the righteousness and holiness of God like huge colossal lions, as I look at His throne, and I delight, as I ascend the steps to bow before the glorious Father's face to know that His righteousness is engaged to save those for whom Jesus died. Let us recount the righteous vengeance of Calvary, the terrors that God cast forth upon His Son when He cursed our sins by making Christ to be a curse for us,

though He knew no sin. This is a subject upon which we should delight to dwell.

Then, if you observe, it was "the righteous acts of the Lord toward His people." Yes; the very marrow of the gospel lies in special, discriminating, distinguishing grace. As for your universal grace, let those have it who care for such meatless bones; but the special gospel of e1ecting love, of distinguishing grace, this is the gospel which is like butter in a lordly dish to a child of God, and he that has once fed on it will take no meaner fare. I delight to believe in the universal *benevolence* of God—He is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works; but His saints shall bless Him, for they are not received with merely benevolence, but with complacency; they are not only His servants, but His sons; not so much the works of His hands, as the children of His loins, the darlings of His bosom, the favorites of His heart, the objects of His eternal choice, the delight of His eyes, His peculiar treasure, His chosen portion, His precious jewels, His rest and delight. The Lord prizes His saints above all the world. He gave Egypt and Ethiopia for them—He did more, He gave His Son for them; He gave heaven's brightest jewel, heaven's glory, heaven's heaven He gave that He might redeem them from all iniquity, and to be His own peculiar people. Thus, my beloved brothers and sisters, take care when you converse upon the Lord's acts, that you speak of His peculiar favor towards Israel, His chosen, His elect.

Note with care that the works which are to be recounted are done towards the inhabitants of the villages of Israel. Does not this suggest that we ought frequently to magnify the Lord's choice favor and tender indulgence towards the least and most feeble of His family? Those villagers, those who knew so little, those who possessed so little, those who could do so little, those who were so weak, so undefended—these were rescued by the divine hand. Speak, then, of the mercy of God towards the little ones of Israel, and you will have no narrow field of speech. Why, if there is a choice word in the Bible, it is always for the weak ones; if there is a peculiarly precious promise, it is generally for the feeble-minded. The best carriage in all the world that I ever heard of is Jesus' bosom, but then that is for the lamb—not for those who are strong, but for the tender and frail. Those most compassionate of sentences in which Jesus seems to have most fully expressed His gentleness, and to have employed the tenderest similes, are evidently spoken with an eye to the trembling and timid. Take for instance that one, "The bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Such words as these we may well talk of together when we meet at the wells of ordinances, and so recount the praise of God and His righteous acts, even His righteous acts towards the villagers of Israel.

III. Lastly, the text says, "Then shall the people of the Lord GO DOWN TO THE GATES," by which several things may be intended.

First, when the people of God are altogether delivered from their sins, and their cares, and their troubles, by the great redemption of the Lord Jesus and the power of His Spirit, then they enjoy *great liberty.* At times

we are like Jeremiah, who said, "I am shut up and cannot come forth," or like another whose way was hedged up with thorns; but when we live in great nearness to Christ, the gates are all opened, and we are the Lord's freemen: instead of needing to keep within the limits which fear prescribes, we take our walks abroad in the fields of blessed liberty and gospel privilege. We walk from Dan to Beersheba in covenant mercies. Do you know what the liberty of a child of God is, dear friends, or are you, all your lifetime, subject to bondage? If you are a child of God, you know something of it, but if you are not initiated into the mystery of the inner life, you will very probably confuse liberty with license. The liberty of the man of the world is liberty to commit evil without restraint: the liberty of a child of God is to walk in holiness without hindrance. When the believer's ways are enlarged, he delights to run in the statutes of the Lord; obedience is freedom to the Lord's servant. Christ's yoke is easy, and His burden is light. I fear that very many of you who are present this morning are slaves—some of you slaves to fashion, you wear the fetters most conspicuously. You are the serfs of custom, and you have not the moral courage to rebel. You bow your necks to human dictation, and admit that you must do what others do. You have neither the manhood nor the grace to strike out a path of your own. Now the true child of God does not care one snap of his finger what others may do, to his own Master he stands or falls. He does what is right, and would sooner take the lion of hell by the beard than do wrong. If others like his integrity, so much the better for them; if they do not like it, they are condemned out of their own mouths. I take it that the genuine Christian who has once come to fear God, fears nobody else; that he scorns to hamper himself with the sinful customs which sway the slavish hordes of mankind. He chooses for himself by the light of God's word, and when he sees a thing to be right, he does it, and he asks no man's liberty on that account. It is a most glorious liberty which a man possesses when he is no longer in bondage to men, to smart under their threats or to fatten in their smiles. Glorious was that ancient father who threw back the threats of his enemies and laughed them to scorn. "We will banish you!" they said. "No!" said the Christian hero, "you cannot do that, because I shall be at home anywhere; I am a citizen of heaven; I am a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth." "But we will shut you out from all your friends!" "No!" he said, "you are not able even to do that, since my best friend will always be with me." "We shall deprive you of your goods!" "But," he replied, "that I know you cannot do, for I gave them all away to the poor but yesterday." "Well, we will take away your life!" "In that, too, I am undismayed," said he, "for death will only give me the life for which I long." No wounds could be inflicted upon a warrior so invulnerable; just so secure is every man who is clad in the armor of faith. He is above the molestation of mankind, for his life is hidden with Christ; his conversation is in heaven; he is free from fear, since he has nothing to fear; all his interests are secure. He has cast himself upon his God in Christ, and since God has made him free, he is free indeed. "He is the free man whom the truth makes free, and all are slaves beside." You do not know what a joy it is to walk erect in con-

scious, mental, moral, spiritual, God-given freedom. Slaves of priestcraft, we pity you; your chains we would not wear for all the wealth of India! Bond slaves of the law, we mourn for you, for your service is heavy, and your captivity is terrible. Serfs of custom, you are more to be scorned than pitied: break your bands asunder, and wear the yoke no more. This day we feel as emancipated slaves must have felt when the last fetter fell to the ground. O glorious liberty, no price can show your excellence, and all the things which we can desire are not to be compared with you.

To go down to the gates, however, means something else, for citizens went down to the gates *to exercise authority and judgment.* He that is in Christ discerns spirits, and separates between the excellent and the reprobate. "The spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." The saints, being led of the Spirit, discern between the precious and the vile; they know the voice of their Shepherd, but a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers. The saints judge this world, and by their living testimony condemn its sin. "Know you not that we shall judge angels" in the day of the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ? Instead of being judged and following others, they who love God become the leaders in right, and are as God's mouth rebuking iniquity.

To go down to the gates signified also to go forth *to war.* When a Christian is saved, he is not content with his own safety; he longs to see others blessed. He can now go out of the gates to attack the foe who once held him in bondage, and therefore he girds on his weapon. When will the church of God be inflamed by the sacred desire of carrying the war for Christ into the enemy's territory? I think I see a great deal in our churches now of a dangerously lethargic conservatism, a settling down contented with our churches, delighted to strengthen our own hands to keep together what we have, and careless about enlargement. The objective of many churches of considerable age seems to be consolidation, and nothing more: but rest assured that the truest consolidation is enlargement, the best conservatism is progress, the truest way to keep what you have is to get more, the best way to retain the divine grace you now possess is to crave for more and more of the blessed spiritual gift. Beloved, if Christ has delivered us from the noise of archers and we are at perfect peace with heaven, do not let us fold our arms and say, "The work is done, let us sleep in peace." O you saved ones, hasten to the armory, array yourselves in the battle gear, and grasp the sword, for now you are called by Christ to a holy warfare! If you are saved, you must seek to save others! If you have received the light of God, carry it into the dark places! If you have escaped from the jaw of the lion, and the paw of the bear, now go forth to fight with the monster and tear others from his power! I trust that the most of you are engaged in some Christian service, but so often as I come into this pulpit and think of the numbers of believers in this church, I feel concerned that we should not allow any part of our territory to lie idle as waste ground—that we should not have a *single member* in this church who is doing nothing. I shall be satisfied, perfectly satisfied, if each one is doing what he can; we cannot expect more, neither does the Lord expect according to what a man has not, but accord-

ing to what he has. But are you, my brothers and sisters, who have been lifted up into the glorious position of saved souls, are you glorifying Christ, and finishing the work which is given you to do? I fear that some of you are not. You can eat the fat and drink the sweet, but you make but small return unto your Lord. I speak to you as a loving brother in Christ, and I pray you think how life will look in the light of its last hour. Think of your residence on earth as you will view it from those summits of bliss beyond the river! Will you wish then to have wasted time, to have lost opportunities? If you could know regrets in the realm of blessedness, would not these be the regrets that you have not served Christ better, loved Him more, spoken of Him more often, given more generously to His cause, and more uniformly proved yourselves to be consecrated to Him? I am afraid that such would be the form of the regrets of paradise, if any could intrude within those gates of pearl. Come, let us live while we live! Let us live up to the utmost stretch of our manhood! Let us ask the Lord to brace our nerves, to string our sinews, and make us true crusaders, knights of the blood-red cross, consecrated men and women, who, for the love we bear Christ's name, will count labor to be ease, and suffering to be joy, and reproach to be honor, and loss to be gain! If we have never yet given ourselves wholly to Christ as His disciples, now hard by His cross, where we see His wounds still bleeding afresh, and Himself quivering in pain for us, let us pledge ourselves in His strength, that we give ourselves wholly to Him without reserve, and so may He help us, by His Spirit, that the vow may be redeemed and the resolve may be carried out—that we may love Christ, and dying may find it gain.

Brothers and sisters, I cannot press this home to you as I would; I must leave it with your own consciences and with the eternal Spirit. If Jesus is not worthy, do not serve Him; but if He is right honorable, serve Him as He ought to be served. If heaven and eternal things are not weighty, then trifle with them; but if they are solemn realities, I beseech you, as honest men and women treat them as realities. If there is a day coming when all your business, and your worldly cares, and your fleeting pleasures, will seem to be mere children's toys; if there is an hour coming when to have served God will be glory, when to have won souls will be renown, then live as in the light of that truth of God, and God help you by His blessed Spirit. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JUDGES 5.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

OUR LIFE, OUR WORK, OUR CHANGE
NO. 764

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 4, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change comes."
Job 14:14.

JOB was well near driven to desperation by the fearful torment of his bodily pains, by the exasperating remarks of his friends, and the cutting suggestion of his wife. It is no wonder if he became somewhat impatient. Never were words of complaint more excusable than in the sad case of Job when he cried, "O that You would hide me in the grave!" Everything that could make life bearable had been taken from him, and every evil which could make death desirable came upon him. Yet, after Job had uttered those exclamations, he seems to have been half ashamed of his weakness, and girding up his loins, he argues with himself, reasoning his soul into a cooler, calmer frame. Job looks his life in the face: he perceives that his warfare is severe, but he remembers it is *but once,* and that when once over and the victory won, there will be no more fighting; and therefore he encourages himself to put up with his present sorrows, and even with future evils, be they what they may, and registers this solemn resolution—far more glorious than the resolve of Alexander to conquer the world—to conquer himself, and to abide with patience the will of God. He fixed it steadfastly in his heart, that all his appointed days until a change should come, he would endure the divine decree with constancy of resignation. None among us can afford to cast a stone at the patriarch for sighing and complaining, for we would not act one half as well ourselves.

We are too much at times like Jonah; we turn cowards, and would gladly flee from our work when it becomes arduous or yields us no honor. If we do not seek a ship to take us to Tarshish, we sigh for a seraph to bear us to heaven. This huge Nineveh has made most of us fear in times of depression. I fear that frequently we act like lineal descendants of those children of Ephraim who, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. We shrink as a bone out of joint which slips aside under pressure. We are not only like Jacob, who halted upon one thigh, but we limp upon both legs at times. We are often disinclined for conflict, and pine for rest, crying, "When will the day be over? When shall we be perfectly at ease?" It is against such a spirit as this that we must struggle; and to help us in the struggle, it seemed to me to be good to

consider the text now before us; and to that end may God bless it, that we may be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change comes."

We shall call your attention this morning, first, to *the aspect of life* which Job gives us; secondly, *to his estimate of our work;* and thirdly, *to his view of the future.*

I. First, let us observe THE ASPECT UNDER WHICH JOB REGARDED THIS MORTAL LIFE. He calls it an *"appointed time,"* or, as the Hebrew has it, *"a warfare."*

Observe that Job styles our life *a time*. Blessed be God that this present state is not an eternity! Though its conflicts may seem long, they must have an end. We are in the finite state, at present, in which all griefs have their closes and conclusions. Long as the night may last, it must yield in due season to the light of the morning. The winter may drag its weary length along, but the spring is hard upon its heels; the tide may ebb out till nothing remains but leagues of mud, and we lament that all the bright blue deep will vanish, but it is not so, the tide must flow again for God has so decreed. Our whole life is brief indeed, and compared with eternity, a mere span, a hand's-breadth. From the summits of eternity, how, like a flying moment will this transient life appear; the pains of this mortal life will seem to be a mere pin's prick to us when we get into the joys never ending and overflowing; and the toils of this life will be as child's play when we reach the everlasting rest. Let us then, my brothers and sisters, judge immortal judgment; lets us not weigh our troubles in the ill-adjusted scales of this poor human life, but let us use the shekel of eternity. We are born for eternity; and although it is true we have to struggle through this one brief hour of toil and conflict, an hour with our God in glory will make up for it all. "I reckon," said that master of heavenly arithmetic, the apostle Paul, who was never wrong in his reckoning, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." The longest and most sorrowful life is but a "time." Whisper that simple truth of God into the ear of the languishing sufferer; tell this glad truth to the son of sorrow, poor and despised; tell it to every daughter of grief, life is but a *time;* it is not eternity. O mourner, contrast your present sorrows with the griefs of lost spirits to whom there is no time—who are cast away forever—who cannot expect a termination to their bitter griefs, but who see this word written in letters of fire before their weeping eyes, "Forever! Forever! FOREVER! FOREVER!"

Job also calls our life an *"appointed"* time. You know who appointed your days. *You* did not appoint them for yourself, and therefore you can have no regrets about the appointment. Neither did Satan appoint them, for the keys of hell and of death do not hang at his waist—

"An angel's arm can't cast me to the grave:

Millions of angels cannot keep me there."

To the almighty God belong the issues from death. He alone can speak the irrevocable word, and bid the spirit return to God who gave it. God alone can wing the shaft that shall end this mortal existence—until He puts His hand to the bow all the archers of earth and hell shall shoot in vain. Our pilgrimage has an appointed beginning and end. In yonder hourglass, which measures your existence, the sands which trickle to the nether globe were all measured into the upper bulb by the divine Hand. There is not a grain of sand too few, nor a grain too many. You shall find that God has appointed with exact wisdom, with profound knowledge, and with irreproachable love all the days and the doings of your life. Remember that you will live out, but not *outlive* your allotted years. You will live up to the last minute, and neither plague, nor pestilence, nor dangers of flood, or field, or battle, can deprive you of the last second which God has measured out to you. But beyond the boundary He appointed you shall not pass, though you take great care and call in the physician—you cannot add a second of time to your determined period. Inexorable death will make no tarrying, but perform his errand promptly when the Master sends him—

"Then to the dust,
Return you must
Without delay."

Should not this cheer us—that the appointment of our lot has been made by a loving Father's prudence, and that the days and bounds of our habitation are not left to the winds of chance or to the waves of uncertainty, but are all decreed immutably by our Father who is in heaven? In the volume of the book our life-story is written—in that same volume where the Savior's covenant engagements were recorded.

You will observe, also, dear friends, that Job very wisely speaks of the *"days"* of our appointed time. It is a prudent thing to forbear the burden of life as a whole, and learn to bear it in the parcels into which providence has divided it. Let us live as life comes, namely, by the day. Our God does not trust us with so much life as a month at once—we live as the clock ticks, a second at a time. Is not that a wiser method of living rather than to perplex our heads by living by the month, or by the year? You have no promise for the year—the word of mercy runs, "As your *days* your strength shall be." You are not commanded to pray for supplies by the year, but, "Give us this *day* our daily bread." Said a good man to me the other day who had many troubles, who has borne them manfully to my knowledge, for these 15 or 20 years, when I asked him how his patience had held out—"Ah," he said, "I said to my afflicted wife the other day, when the coals came in, 'It takes several big fellows to bring in the sacks, but yet our little kitchen maid, Mary, has brought the whole ton up from the cellar into our parlor; but she has done it a scuttle-full at a time. She has as surely moved those tons of coal as ever did

the wagons when they brought them in, but she has moved them little by little, and done it easily.'" This is how to bear the troubles of life, a day's portion at a time. Wave by wave our trials come, and let us breast them one by one, and not attempt to buffet the whole ocean's billows at once. Let us stand as the brave old Spartan did, in the Thermopylae of the day, and fight the Persians as they come on one by one, thus shall we keep our adversities at bay, and overcome them as they advance in single file; but let us not venture into the plain amidst the innumerable hordes of Persians, or we shall speedily be swallowed up, and our faith and patience will be overcome. I would gladly live by the day, and work by the day, and suffer by the day till all my days are over, and I see the Ancient of Days in that land where *days* are lost in one eternal *day*, and the soul swims in seas of joy forever.

I must not fail to remind you of the Hebrew: "All the days of my *warfare* will I wait." Life is indeed a "warfare," and just as a man enlists in our army for a term of years, and then his service runs out, and he is free, so every believer is enlisted in the service of life, to serve God till his enlistment is over, and we sleep in death. Our charge and our armor we shall put off together. Brothers and sisters, you are enlisted soldiers, when you believe in Jesus. Let me remind you that you are a soldier, you will be always at war, you will never have a furlough or conclude a treaty. Like the old knights who slept in their armor, you will be attacked even in your rest. There is no part of the journey to heaven which is secure from the enemy, and no moment, not even the sweet rest of the Lord's Day, when the clarion may not sound. Therefore, prepare yourselves always for the battle. "Put on the whole armor of God," and look upon life as a continued battle. Be surprised when you do not have to fight; be wonderstruck when the world is peaceful towards you; be astonished when your old corruptions do not rise and assault you. You must travel with your swords always drawn, and you may as well throw away the scabbard, for you will never need it. You are a soldier who must always fight, and by the light of battle you must survey the whole of your life.

Taking these thoughts together as Job's view of mortal life, what then? Why, beloved, it is but once, as we have already said—we shall serve our God on earth in striving after His glory but once. Let us carry out the engagements of our enlistment honorably. He who enters into Her Majesty's service for a term of years, if he is an honorable man, resolves that he will act worthily, as long as he is in the ranks. So let it be with us: we shall never enter upon another war; let us wage the present warfare gloriously. We carry in our hands a sword, we have but to use it in one great life-battle, and then it shall be hung up on the wall forever. Let us use our weapon well, that we may not have to resign it, rusty and dishonored, as a memorial of our disgrace. Let us march cheerily to the fight, since it is but once. Let us play the man, and be like David's mightiest, who feared no risks, but accepted deadly odds, and won and held

their own against all comers. Come, beloved, we have an appointed time, and it is running out every hour, let us rejoice to see it go. Our Captain appointed it, He commanded us to stand sentry, or to rush into the front of the battle. Since the time is appointed by our well-beloved King, let us not dishonor His appointment, but in the name of Him who gave us our commission to live and fight, let us war a good warfare, living at the highest bent of our force, and the utmost strength of our being. And since, dear friends, it is the Lord's war that we are engaged in, we are enlisted under the great Captain of our salvation, who leads us on to sure and certain victory, let us not be discouraged; let not our hearts fail us; let us quit ourselves like men, and be strong, for the Lord our God is with us, and we have the mighty One of Israel to be our Captain. Let us glorify the grace of God while we are permitted to remain on earth to glorify it! Let us be up and at our enemies while there are enemies for us to fight. Let us carve out victory while we have the raw material of conflict to carve. There are no battles to be fought, and no victories to be won in heaven. So now, in this life let us resolve in the name and strength of God the Holy Spirit, with all our force and vigor to glorify God who has appointed us our warfare. We now leave this head to turn to the second, and may God the Holy Spirit bless us in so doing.

II. JOB'S VIEW OF OUR WORK while on earth is that we are to *wait*. "All the days of my appointed time will I *wait."* The word "wait" is very full of teaching. It contains the whole of the Christian life, if understood in all its various senses. Let us take up a few very briefly.

In the first place, the Christian life should be one of waiting; that is, *setting loose of all earthly things.* Many travelers are among us this morning; they are passing from one town to another, viewing many countries; but if they are only travelers, and are soon to return to their homes, they do not speculate in the various businesses of Lombard Street or Cheapside. They do not attempt to buy large estates and lay them out, and make gold and silver thereby; they know that they are only strangers, and they act as such. They take such interest in the affairs of the country in which they are sojourning as may be becoming in those who are not citizens of it; they wish well to those among whom they sojourn and dwell; but that is all, for they are going home, therefore, they do not intend to bind themselves with anything that might make it difficult to part from our shores. They know that they are on the wing, and therefore they live like strangers and sojourners. As a Bedouin wandering across the desert, so is a Christian—a bird of passage; a voyager seeking the haven. This is not our rest: it is polluted—

"Sad thought were this to be our home!"

The wisdom of the Christian is to disentangle himself as much as possible from the things of this life. He will act kindly towards the citizens of the country where he is called to dwell, and he will seek their good: still he will remember that he is not as they are. He is an alien among them.

He may have to buy and sell in this world, but that is merely as a matter of transient convenience. He neither buys nor sells for eternity; for he has "bought the truth," and he "sells it not." He has received God to be His treasure, and his heart and his treasure too he has sent on ahead. On the other side of the river all his joys and all his treasures are to be found. Here he looks upon his earthly joys as things that are lent him—borrowed comforts. If his children die, he does not wonder—he knew that they were not immortal. If his friends are taken away, he is not astonished—he understood that they were born of women, and therefore would die like the rest. If his wealth takes to itself wings, he does not marvel—he knew that it was a bird of passage, and he is not astonished when, like the swallows, it flies elsewhere. He long ago learned that the world is founded on the floods; and therefore when it moves beneath him, he understands that this is the normal state of things, and he is not at all amazed, but rather wonders that the world is not all panic and confusion, since it is so unsubstantial. As Samson shook the Philistine temple, so shall the word of the Lord in the hour of final doom lay all nature prone in one common ruin; and vain is he who boasts of his possessions where all is waiting to be overturned. Brothers and sisters, are you doing so? Some of you professors, I am afraid, are living as though this were your rest. You do not wish to go home, do you? The nest is very comfortable: you have feathered it warmly. You have all that heart could wish. Here you would gladly abide for ages. Ah, well, may this worldliness be cast out of you, and may you be seized with Homesickness, that sweet disease which every true patriot ought to have, an insatiable longing for his dear fatherland. Have you never heard of the Swiss soldiers in the French army, who would fall sick when they heard the music of the songs which reminded them of their native mountains, with their chalets and peasants, and the cowboy's song? Ill could they rest in sunny France when their hearts were among Helvetia's rugged hills. Are there no sweet songs of Zion which remind you of that blessed land where our best friends, our kindred dwell, where God our Savior reigns? If we are true citizens of the New Jerusalem, we shall long for that fair country, the home of the elect—

"Ah, then my spirit faints
To reach the land I love,
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above."

It is your duty, Christian, and your privilege, to let loose of the things of earth, and say with Job, "All the days of my appointed time I will wait"—like a mere waiter—"till my change come."

A second meaning of the text, however, is this—we must *wait expecting* to be gone—expecting daily and hourly to be summoned by our Lord. The proper and healthy estate of a Christian is to be anticipating the hour of his departure as near at hand. I have observed a great readiness

to depart in many dying saints, but the same readiness ought to characterize living saints also. Our dear friend, Mr. James Smith, whom some of you remember as preaching the word at Park Street, and afterwards at Cheltenham, when I saw him, some little while before his departure, described himself thus: "You have seen a passenger who has gone to the station, taken his ticket, all his luggage brought in, all packed up, strapped, directed; and you have seen him sitting with his ticket in his hand waiting till the train comes up. That," said he, "is exactly my condition. I am ready to go as soon as my heavenly Father pleases to come for me." And is not that how we should always live—waiting for the Lord's appearing? Mr. Whitefield used to say of his well-known order and regularity, "I like to go to bed feeling that if I were to die tonight, there is not so much as a pair of my gloves out of their proper place." No Christian ought to live without having his will made, and his estate put in proper condition, in case he should die suddenly. That hint may be useful to some of you who have neglected to set your house in order. No Christian should live expecting to live another day. You cannot reckon upon an hour. You should rather be so ready, that if you were to walk out of this tabernacle and fall down dead upon the steps, it would not make any derangement in your affairs, because you are equally ready for life or death. One of our beloved sisters this week was walking down Paternoster Row—her mourning friends sit here, but they have no cause to mourn. Sudden faintness came over her: she was taken into a shop, and water was offered to her, but she could not drink; no, she was already drinking of the water of the river of life that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In a moment she closed her eyes to the sorrows of earth, and opened them to the joys of heaven. When we visit the graves of those who have died in Christ, we ought not to weep for them; or, if we weep at all it should be with the regret that we are not yet admitted to the same reward. To "die daily" is the business of Christians. It is greatly wise to talk about our last hours, to make ourselves familiar with the grave. Our venerable forefathers had a strange habit of placing on the dressing table a death's head as a *memento mori*—either a real skull, or else an ornament fashioned in the form of it—to remind them of their end; yet, so far as I can gather, they were happy men and happy women, and none the less so because they familiarized themselves with death. A genuine Puritan, perhaps, never lived a day without considering the time when he would put off the garments of clay, and enter into rest; and these were the happiest and holiest of people, while this thoughtless generation which banishes the thought of dying is wretched with all its hollow pretense of mirth. I exhort you, brothers and sisters, wait! Wait always for the trumpet call! Live as looking for the Lord to come and take you from this mortal state, waiting for the convoy of angels to take you to the city of the blessed, in the land of the hereafter.

Nor is this all, waiting means *enduring with patience.* We are put into this world for one appointed time of suffering, and in sacred patience we must abide steadfast the heat of the furnace. The life of many Christians is a long martyrdom—they are to bear it patiently. "Here is the patience of the saints." Many believers go from one sickness to another, from one loss to another; but herein they fulfill their life's design, if through abundant grace they learn to bear their woes without a murmur, and to wait their appointed time without repining.

Serving is also another kind of waiting. The Lord Jesus gives us plain directions as to service in the parable recorded in the 17th chapter of Luke: "But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, go and sit down to dinner? And will not rather say unto him, make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird yourself and serve me, till I have eaten and drunk; and afterwards you shall eat and drink?" In this world we are to wait upon the Lord Jesus, running His errands, nursing His children, feeding His lambs, fighting His foes, repairing the walls of His vineyard, doing anything and everything which He may please to give us. And mark you, this is to be attended with perseverance, for Job says, *"All* the days of my appointed time will I wait." He would not be a servant sometimes, and then skulk home in idleness at another season, as if his term of service were ended. Every saint should say, "I will wait upon You, my God, as long as I live; as long as I have breath to draw, it shall be spent for You. So long as I have life to spend here below, I will spend it and be spent in Your service." This should be the spirit of the Christian all his days, to his last day. Waiting still, like a holy man of God among the American Indians, who, when he lay dying, was observed to be teaching a poor little Indian to read his letters, and he said, "What a mercy, now I am laid aside from preaching, that I can teach this poor little child to read his letters; God has still something for me to do, and my prayer is that I may not live an hour after I cannot do anything for Christ." May we be in just such a state of heart!

Moreover, to close this aspect of Christian life, we should be *desirous to be called home.* No Christian ought to desire to leave the field of battle till the victory is won, nor to leave the field till the plow has gone up to the headland for the last time, but still he may desire to be at home, and must desire it because of the love which he bears his Lord. I cannot understand you if you do not sometimes sing that hymn—

"My heart is with Him on His throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away.'"

Do you love your husband, wife, if you do not really wish to see him? Do you love your home, child, if you do not wish for the time when the school shall break up, and you shall leave for home? Oh, it is a weary

world, even though our Lord makes it bearable by the sweet glimpses we get of Him through the telescope of faith, when He throws the lattices aside and shows Himself. Yet these sweets only cause us to long for more. I tell you heavenly food on earth is a hunger-making thing; it makes you desire fresh supplies. You cannot sip from the waters of divine grace on earth without longing to lie down at the wellhead and drink your full of glory. Do you ever have a heart-sickness after heaven? Do you ever feel the cords that bind you to Christ tugging at your heart strings to draw you nearer? Oh, yes! You must feel this; and if you are mixing up these longings to be with Christ, these expectations to depart, with a patient endurance of the divine Will, you have hit upon Job's true idea of life. May you not only have the idea, but carry it out practically; may all believers do so to the praise and glory of divine grace.

III. Now comes JOB'S ESTIMATE OF THE FUTURE. It is expressed in this word, "Till my change come." He refers to the two great changes which he views at one glance—the change of death when we shall "shuffle off this mortal coil"—the change of resurrection when we shall put on our imperishable garments—shall be girt about with eternal gladness.

Beloved, let it be observed that in a certain sense death and resurrection are not a change to a Christian—they are not a change as to his *identity*. The same man who lives here will live forever. The same saint who serves God on earth will wake up in the image of Christ to serve Him day and night in His temple, and that identity will exist not only with regard to the soul, but the body; "My eyes shall see Him and not another." These very eyes which have wept for sin shall see the King in His beauty; and these hands which here have served the Lord, shall embrace Him in His glory. Do not think that death will destroy the identity of the resurrection body: it will be as much the same as the full-blown flower is the same as the seed out of which it grew. There will be a mighty development, but it will still be the same. *It* is sown a natural body, and the same *it* is raised a spiritual body. There will also be to the regenerate no change as to his vitality. We are quickened now by the Life of Christ, which is the same Life that will quicken us in heaven; the incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever. "He that believes on the Son *has* everlasting life." He has it now—the same life which he is to live in heaven, where it will be more developed, more glorious, but still the same.

There will be no difference in the Christian's objective in life when he gets to heaven. He lives to serve God here—he will live for the same end and aim there. Here holiness is his delight; it shall be his delight there. And his occupation will not change, either—he served his Master like a waiting servant during his days on earth—he will be taken up to serve Him day and night in His temple.

And the Christian will not experience a very great change as to his companions. Here on earth the excellent of the earth are all his delight; Christ Jesus his Elder Brother abides with him; the Holy Spirit, the

Comforter, is resident within him; he communes with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The fact is, heaven and earth to the Christian are the same house, only the one is the lower floor, and the other is the upper story; the one is so low and near the ground, that sometimes the water of trouble rushes into it, and the windows of the rooms below are so dark, that but a small degree of the light of heaven ever enters them, and the view is contracted. But the other rooms upstairs have a fair view, and the sun shines always through their windows, and they are furnished with a matchless skill; but still it is the same house. Heaven is thus but a slight change in some respects, yet it *is* a change, and we shall see that readily enough.

To the Christian it will be a change *of place*. He will be away from the dull and coarse materialism of this defiled, sin-stricken earth where thorns and thistles grow, and he will arrive at the place where the inhabitants shall no more say, "I am sick"—the paradise of God, where flowers wither not. He will change his *neighborhood*. He is vexed here with the ungodly conversation of the wicked; he often finds his neighbors to be like the men of Sodom, exceedingly vile; but there angels shall be fellow citizens with him, and he shall commune with the spirits of the just made perfect. No vain discourse shall vex his ears; no sin shall come before him to disgust his mind; he shall not be a stranger in a strange land, but a child at home. There, too, will be a great change as to his *outward circumstances*. No sweat will need to be wiped from his brow, no tear from his eyes. There are no funeral knells to be heard in heaven; no open graves to be filled with the dead. In heaven there is no poverty, no proud man's scorn, no oppressor's heavy heel, no persecutor's fiery brand; but there "the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest."

Especially will it be a change to the Christian as to that which will be *within him.* No body of this death to hamper him; no infirmities to cramp him; no wandering thoughts to disturb his devotion; no birds to come down upon the sacrifice, needing to be driven away. As the body shall be free from the corruption which engenders death, so shall the soul be free from the corruption which engenders strife against the new law which is in the believer's members. He shall be perfectly free from sin. There will be this change, too, that he will be delivered from that dog of hell who once howled in his ears—as the world will be afar off, and cannot tempt, so Satan will be afar off, and cannot molest. A change indeed it will be, in a special manner, to some. Have you ever visited the hospital, and sat by the side of the poor Christian woman who has lain upon that bed for months—her hearing almost gone, her sight failing, scarcely able to breathe, palpitations of the heart, life a protracted agony? Oh, what a change from the bed of languishing to the throne of God! What a difference between that hospital, with its sounds of sickness and of sorrow, and yonder New Jerusalem and the shout of them who triumph, the song of them who feast! What an escape from the dying bed to the living glo-

ry—from the glazing eyes and the wasting frame, and the cold death sweat, to the glory which excels, and the harps of angels, and the songs of the glorified! What a change, too, for some of the poor, for some of you sons of penury who are here this morning, from that hard work which scarcely knows a pause, from those weary fingers, and that flying needle, and that palpitating heart; from that sleep which gives but little rest, because the toil begins so soon that it seems to pervade and injure the sleep itself. What an exchange from that naked room, that unfurnished table! From that cup which, so far from running over, you find it difficult to fill! From all those various pains and woes that penury is heir to, to the wealth and happiness of paradise! What a change for you, to the mansions of the blessed, and the crowns of immortality, and the company of the princes of the blood royal, with whom you shall dwell forever! And what a change, again, for the persecuted! I know how a father's angry words break your heart, and how a husband's cruel remarks grieve you; but you shall soon escape from it all. The jeer of the workshop sometimes reminds you of the cruel mocking you have often read of. What a change for you to be in sweet company where friends shall cheer and make you glad! My brothers and sisters, what a leap it must have been for the martyrs—right away from their stakes to their thrones! What a change for the men who rotted in dungeons till the moss grew on their eyelids—to the immortal beauty of the fairest of the fair, midst the bright ones doubly bright! What a change!

Right well, good patriarch, did you use the term, for it is the greatest of all changes. If you require a commentary upon this word "change," turn to the 15th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, and read it through; we read it in your hearing just now. You will there see that all that needs to be changed will be changed. All that must be changed to make the believer perfectly blessed will be transformed and transfigured by the Master. If you desire a glimpse of what we shall be in heaven, remember the face of Moses when it glowed so that he covered it with a veil! Remember Stephen's face when they looked upon him and saw it looked as if it were the face of an angel! Remember our Lord transfigured till He was whiter than any fuller could make Him! Those were transient gleams and glimpses of the beatific glory which shall surround every one of the blessed before long.

My brothers and sisters, perhaps to you it will be a sudden change. Last Sunday our sister sat here; this Sunday she sits there in heaven! Others, too, have gone this week to their Home. I suppose week by week about two in this congregation die almost as regularly as I come into this pulpit. So you melt away one after the other, and you disappear; but blessed thought if, when you disappear, it is to shine forever in heaven! Well, let the change come suddenly. There is much to be envied in sudden death. I never could understand why it should be put in the litany, "From sudden death, good Lord, deliver us." O brothers and sisters, sud-

den death may God send to us so long as we are but prepared, for then we miss the pain of sickness in the gradual breaking down of the frame. It must be desirable, a choice favor which God only gives to some of His peculiarly beloved ones—a thing to pray for, not to pray against. Well it may be sudden. There is this about it, however, that if we are in Christ, let it come suddenly, we are fully prepared, "For you are complete in Him." "He who believes has everlasting life." "He who lives and believes in Me shall never die." Death has lost all its terror to you who are in Christ. And there is one very sweet thought to my mind, and that though a change, it is the last change. Glory be to God, there will be no more of it, once changed into the likeness of Christ, and there will be no more changes, but immortality forever!—

"Forever with the Lord."

We may well add—

"Amen! So let it be!"

O you who have no hope in Jesus, death must be to you a gloomy thing indeed! It puts out your candle and leaves you forever in the dark. But you who have a good hope through divine grace, and have built your house upon the rock, you may joyfully look forward to the end of your appointed days, waiting until your change comes, blessing God that it will come in its appointed time, and that when it comes it will be a change for the better to you in all respects—a change which shall never be followed by another change, a change which shall make you like your Lord forever and ever!

May God give His blessing! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
JOB 14; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:42-58.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of
C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English,
and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit:
www.spurgeongems.org

GRACE—THE ONE WAY OF SALVATION
NO. 765

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

"But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."
Acts 15:11.

YOU who are conversant with Scripture will recollect that these are the words of the apostle Peter. Paul and Barnabas had been preaching the gospel among the Gentiles with great success, but "certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed," could not get rid of their old Jewish bigotry, and vehemently urged that the converted Gentiles ought to be circumcised, or else they could not be saved. They made a great clamor over this, and there was no small dissension and disputation. The children of the bondwoman mustered all their forces, while the champions of glorious liberty arrayed themselves for the battle. Paul and Barnabas, those valiant soldiers of the cross, stood out stoutly against the ritualistic brothers, and told them that the rite of circumcision did not belong to the Gentiles at all, and ought not to be forced upon them; they would not yield their free principles at the dictation of the Judaizers, but scorned to bow their necks to the yoke of bondage. It was agreed to bring the matter up for decision at Jerusalem before the apostles and elders; and when all the brothers had assembled, there seems to have been a considerable dispute, in the midst of which, Peter, speaking with his usual boldness and clearness, declared that it would be wrong to put a heavy yoke upon the necks of the Gentiles, which neither that generation of Jews nor their fathers had been able to bear, and then he concluded his address by saying, in effect, "Although these people are not circumcised, and ought not to be, yet we believe that there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, but by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." Herein Peter was not to be blamed, but to be greatly commended, for he spoke under the influence of the Spirit of God.

I. We shall use the text as concisely as we can for three important purposes; and in the first place, we shall look upon it AS AN APOSTOLIC CONFESSION OF FAITH.

You notice it begins with, *"We believe."* We will call it, then, the "Apostle's Creed," and we may rest assured that it has quite as clear a right to that title as that highly esteemed composition which is commonly called the "Nicene, or Apostle's Creed." Peter is speaking for the rest, and he says, "We believe." Well, Peter, what do you believe? We are all attentive. Peter's answer is, "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." There is a great deal of talk in

our day—foolish, vainglorious, idiotic, senseless talk, as we think, about apostolic succession. Some persons think they have the direct line from the apostles running right at their feet, and others believe that those who make the greatest boast about it have the least claim to it. There are clergymen who imagine that because they happen to be in a church which is in open alliance with the state, they must necessarily be ministers of the church of which Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Now *we* think that their union with the state is in itself a conclusive reply to all such claims to apostolic succession; and moreover, we remark many fatal points of difference between the apostles and their professed successors. Whenever did Peter or Paul become state-paid ministers? In what state church did they enroll themselves? What tithes did they receive? What rates did they levy? What laws did they make upon the Jews and the Gentiles? Were they rectors or vicars, prebendaries or deans, canons or curates? Did they buy their livings in the market? Did they sit in the Roman House of Lords dressed in lawn sleeves? Were they styled Right Reverend Fathers in God? Were they appointed by the Prime Minister of the day? Did they put on gowns, and read prayers out of a book? Did they christen children, and call them regenerate, and bury wicked reprobates in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection? As opposite as light is from darkness were those apostles from the men who pretend to be their divinely-appointed successors! When will men cease to thrust their arrogant pretences into our faces? Only when the common sense, to say nothing of the religion of our country, shall have rebuked their presumption!

One thing is clear from this "Apostle's Creed" which we have before us—*it is clear that the apostles did not believe in ritualism.* Peter—why, they make him out to be the head of the church! Do they not say that he was the first pope, and so on? I am sure if Peter were here he would grow very angry with them for slandering him so scandalously, for in his epistle he expressly warned others against being lords over God's heritage, and you may be sure he did not fall into that sin himself. When he is asked for his confession of faith, he stands up and declares that he believes in salvation by divine grace alone. "We believe." O bold apostle, what do you believe? Now we still hear it. Peter will say, "We believe in circumcision; we believe in regeneration by baptism; we believe in the sacramental efficacy of the Lord's Supper; we believe in pompous ceremonies; we believe in priests, and altars, and robes, and rubrics!" No; he does not utter a syllable concerning anything of the kind. He says, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we who have been circumcised shall be saved, just like those who have not been circumcised; we believe that we shall be saved, even as they." He makes very little, it seems, of ceremonies in the matter of salvation. He takes care that no idea of sacramentarianism shall mar his explicit confession of faith; he glories in no rite, and rests in no ordinance. All his testimony is concerning the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says nothing what-

ever about ordinances, ceremonies, apostolic gifts, or prelate unction—his theme is GRACE, and GRACE alone; and those, my brothers and sisters, are the true successors of the apostles who teach you that you are to be saved through the unmerited favor and free mercy of God, agreeing with Peter in their testimony, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved." These are the men who preach to you the gospel of salvation through the blood and righteousness of Jesus; but those pretended ministers who boast of their priesthood, preach another gospel, "which is not another; but there are some that trouble you." Upon their heads shall be the blood of deluded souls. They profess to regenerate others, but they will perish themselves; they talk of sacramental grace, and shall receive eternal destruction! Woe unto them, for they are deceivers and liars! May the Lord deliver this land from their superstitions!

Another thing is very clear here. The apostle *did not believe in self-righteousness.* The creed of the world is, "Do your best and it will be all right with you." To question this is treason against the pride of human nature, which evermore clings to salvation by its own merits. Every man is born a Pharisee. Self-confidence is bred in the bones—and will come out in the flesh. "What?" says a man, "do you not believe that if a man does his best, he will fare well in the next world? Why, you know, we must all live as well as we can, every man according to his own light; and if every man follows out his own conscience, as near as may be, surely it will be well with us?" That is not what Peter said. Peter did not say, "We believe that through doing our best, we shall be saved like other people." He did not even say, "We believe that if we act according to our light, God will accept that little light for what it was." No, the apostle strikes out quite another track, and solemnly affirms, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved," not through our good works, not through anything that we do, not by the merit of anything which we feel or perform, or promise to perform, but by grace, that is to say, by the free favor of God—

"Perish each thought of human pride,
Let God alone be magnified."

We believe that if we are ever saved at all, we must be saved gratis—saved as the gratuitous act of a bountiful God—saved by a gift, not by wages—saved by God's love, not by our own doings or merits. This is the apostle's creed: salvation is all of divine grace from first to last, and the channel of that grace is the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved, and lived, and died, and rose again for our salvation. Those who preach mere morality, or set up any way except that of trusting in the grace of God through Christ Jesus, preach another gospel, and they shall be accursed, even though they preach it with an angel's eloquence. In the day when the Lord shall come to discern between the righteous and the wicked, their work, as wood, hay, and stubble, shall be burnt up; but those who preach salvation by grace through Jesus Christ, shall find that their

work, like gold, and silver, and precious stones, shall survive the fire, and great shall be their reward.

I think it is very clear, again, from the text *that the apostles did not believe in salvation by the natural force of free will.* I fail to detect a trace of the glorification of free will here. Peter puts it, "We believe that we shall be saved;" through what? Through our own unbiased will? Through the volitions of our own well-balanced nature? Not at all, sir; but, "we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved." He takes the crown from off the head of man in all respects, and gives all glory to the grace of God; he extols God, the gracious sovereign, who will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and who will have compassion upon whom He will have compassion. I wish I had a voice of thunder to proclaim in every street of London this glorious doctrine, "By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." This is the old reformation doctrine. This is the doctrine which will shake the very gates of hell, if it is but faithfully preached. O for an army of witnesses to publish abroad the gospel of grace in its sovereignty, Omnipotence, and fullness. If you are ever to get comfort, believe me, dear hearer, you must receive the doctrine of salvation by free grace into your soul as the delight and solace of your heart, for it is the living truth of the living God. Not by ritualism, not by good works, not by our own unaided free will are we saved, but by the grace of God alone.—

"Not for the works which we have done,
Or shall hereafter do,
Has God decreed on sinful worms
Salvation to bestow.
The glory, Lord, from first to last,
Is due to You alone:
Anything to ourselves we dare not take,
Or rob You of Your crown."

Were I now to take this apostle's creed to pieces, and look closely at the details of it, it would be easy to show that this creed contains within it many important truths of God. It implies, most evidently, the doctrine of *human ruin.* "We believe that we shall be *saved*." That statement assuredly implies that we need to be saved. The apostle Peter, as well as his brother apostle, Paul, was sound in the faith concerning the total depravity of human nature, he viewed man as a lost creature, needing to be saved by divine grace. He believed in those three great "r's" which Rowland Hill used to talk about—ruin, redemption, and regeneration. He saw most clearly man's ruin, or he would not have been so explicit upon man's salvation. If Peter were here to preach tonight, he would not tell us that man, though he is a little fallen, is still a noble creature, who needs only a little assistance, and he will be quite able to right himself. Oh, the fearful flattery which has been heard from some pulpits! Anointing corruption with the unction of hypocrisy; smearing the abomination of our depravity with sickening eulogies! Peter would give no countenance to

such false prophets. No, he would faithfully testify that man is *dead* in sin, and life's a gift; that man is lost, utterly fallen and undone. He speaks in his epistles of the former lusts of our ignorance, of our vain conversation received by tradition of our fathers, and of the corruption which is in the world through lust. In the verse before us, he tells us that the best of men, men such as himself and the other apostles, had need to be saved, and, consequently, they must have been originally among the lost, heirs of wrath even as others. I am sure that he was a firm believer in what are called *"the doctrines of grace,"* as he was certainly in his own person an illustrious trophy and everlasting monument of divine grace. What a ring there is in that word GRACE! Why, it does one good to speak it and to hear it; it is, indeed, "a charming sound, harmonious to the ear." When one feels the power of it, it is enough to make the soul leap out of the body for joy—

"Grace! How good, how cheap, how free,
Grace, how easy to be found!
Only let your misery
In the Savior's blood be drowned!"

How it suits a sinner! How it cheers a poor forlorn wanderer from God! Grace! Peter was not in a fog about this; his witness is clear as crystal, decisive as the sentence of a judge. He believed that salvation was of God's free favor, and God's almighty power; and he speaks out like a man, "We believe that we are saved by grace."

Our apostle was also most decided and explicit concerning *the atonement.* Cannot you see the atonement in the text, sparkling like a jewel in a well-made ring? We are saved "through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." What does the apostle mean but the grace which came streaming from those five wounds when the Savior hung on the cross? What does he mean but the grace which is revealed to us in the bleeding sufferer who took our sins, and carried our sorrows, that we might be delivered from wrath through Him? O that everyone were as clear about the atonement as Peter is! Peter had seen his Master; no, more, his Master had looked at him and broken his heart, and afterwards bound it up, and given him much grace; and now Peter is not content with saying, "We believe that we shall be saved through grace," but he is careful to word it, "We believe that we shall be saved *through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Dear hearers, never have any questions upon the vital point of redemption by blood. This is a fundamental truth of God; he who is in darkness upon this subject, has no light of God in him. What the sun is to the heavens, the doctrine of a vicarious satisfaction is to theology. Atonement is the brain and spinal cord of Christianity. Take away the cleansing blood, and what is left to the guilty? Deny the substitutionary work of Jesus, and you have denied all that is precious in the New Testament. Never never let us endure one wavering, doubtful thought upon this all-important truth of God.

It seems to me, too, that without straining the text, I might easily prove that Peter believed in the doctrine of *the final perseverance of the saints.* They were not, in a certain sense, it seems, perfectly saved when he spoke, but he says, "We believe we shall be saved." Well, but Peter, may you not fall away and perish? "No," he says, "we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *we shall be saved."* How positively he speaks of it! I do wish you, dear friends, to get a firm and intelligent hold of the doctrine of the safety of the believer, which is as clear as noonday in the Scriptures. Upon the whole you have learned it, and can defend it well, but all of you should be able to give a reason for the hope that is in you. I have known one of our people met by those who do not believe this doctrine, and they have said to him, "You will fall away; look at your own weakness and tendency to sin." "No," said the man, "I know I would if I were left to myself, but then Christ has promised that He will never leave me nor forsake me." Then it is sometimes said, "but you may be a believer in Christ today, and yet perish tomorrow;" but our friends generally reply, " Do not tell us that lie: God's saints shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of Jesus' hand; as for your doctrine of the final falling of the Lord's blood-bought ones, if that is the gospel, go and keep it to yourselves; as for us, we would not go two inches to listen to it; there is nothing in it to lay hold of; it is a bone without marrow; there is no strength, no comfort for the soul in it." If I know when I trust Christ that He will save me at the last, then I have something to rest upon, something worth living for, but if it is all a mere "if," or "but," or "maybe," or "perhaps," a little of myself, and a little of Christ, I am in a poor case, indeed! A gospel which proclaims an uncertain salvation is a miserable imposition; away with such a gospel, away with such a gospel; it is a dishonor to Christ; it is a discredit to God's people; it neither came from the Scriptures of truth, nor does it bring glory to God!

Thus, have I tried to open up the apostle's creed, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."

II. And now, having used the text as the apostle's confession of faith, I shall take it as THE CONVERTED MORAL MAN'S STATEMENT.

Let me show you what I mean. Observe and admire the way in which Peter puts the case. A company of Jews has assembled to discuss a certain matter, and some of them look very wise, and bring up certain suggestions that are rather significant. They say, "Well, perhaps these Gentile dogs may be saved; yes, Jesus Christ told us to go and preach the gospel to every creature; therefore, no doubt, He must have included these Gentile dogs—we do not like them, though, and must keep them as much under our rules and regulations as we can; we must compel them to be circumcised; we must have them brought under the full rigor of the law; we cannot excuse them from wearing the yoke of bondage." Presently, the apostle Peter gets up to speak, and you expect to hear him say—do you not?—to these gentlemen, "Why, these 'Gentile dogs,' as you call

them, can be saved, even as *you."* No; he adopts quite a different tone; he turns the tables, and he says to them, "We believe that you may be saved, even as they." It were just as if I should have a company of persons here now who had been very bad and wicked, who had plunged into the deepest sin, but God's grace has met with them and made them new creatures in Christ Jesus: there is a church meeting, and when these persons are brought before the church, suppose there were some of the members who should say, "Yes, we believe that a drunk may be saved, and a person who has been a harlot may, *perhaps*, be saved, too." But imagine, now, that I were to stand up and reply, "Now, my dear brothers and sisters, I believe that *you* may be saved even as *these!"* What a rebuke it would be! This is precisely what Peter meant. "Oh," he said, "do not raise the question about whether *they* can be saved—the question is whether *you*, who have raised such a question, will be saved." "We believe that, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they." So he seems, in this dispute, to take the objectors aback, and to put the Gentile believers first in order, to cast out the bad, proud, wicked, devilish spirit of self-righteousness.

Now, brothers and sisters, some of us were favored by providence with the great privilege of having Christian parents, and consequently we never did know a great deal of the open sin into which others have fallen. Some of us never were inside a theater in our lives, never saw a play, and do not know what it is like. There are some here who, perhaps, never did frequent the tavern, do not know a lascivious song, and never uttered an oath. This is cause for great thankfulness, very great thankfulness indeed; but, O you excellent moralists, mind you do not say in your heart, "We are quite sure to be saved," for, let me tell you, you have not before God any advantage over the outward transgressor, so as to entitle you to be saved in a less humbling manner. If you are ever saved, you will have to be saved in the same way as those who have been permitted to plunge into the most outrageous sin. Your being restrained from overt offenses is a favor for you to be grateful, but not a virtue for you to trust in. Ascribe it to God's providential goodness, but do not wrap it about you as though it were to be your wedding garment, for if you do, your self-righteousness will be more dangerous to you than some men's open sins are to them; for do you not know how the Savior put it, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." You moral people must be saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—saved *even as they,* the outcasts, the wanderers. You will not, you cannot be saved in any other way, and will not be saved at all if you do not submit to this way. You will not be permitted to enter heaven, good as you think yourselves to be, unless you come down to the terms and conditions which sovereign grace has laid down, namely, that you should trust Christ, and be saved by divine grace, "even as they."

To prove to you, dear friends, that this must be the case, I will suppose that you have picked out 20 people who have been good, in a moral

sense, from their youth up. Now, these people must be saved just the same as those other 20 over yonder, who have been as bad as bad can be from their earliest childhood, and I will tell you why—because these amiable persons fell in Adam just as surely as the outcasts did; they are as fully partakers of the curse of the fall as the profane and drunken; and they were born in sin and shaped in iniquity just as the dissolute and the dishonest were. There is no difference in the blood of humanity, it flows from one polluted source, and is tainted in all its channels. The depravity of human nature does not belong merely to those who are born in dirty back courts and alleys, but it is as certainly manifest in those of you who were born in the best parts of the city. You dwellers in Belgravia are as altogether born in sin as the denizens of Bethnal Green. The West End is as sensual as the East. Hyde Park has no natural superiority of nature over Seven Dials. The corruption of those born in the castle at Windsor is as deep as the depravity of workhouse children. You, ladies and gentlemen, are born with hearts as bad and as black as the poorest of the poor. You sons of Christian parents, do not imagine, because you spring of a godly ancestry, that therefore your nature is not polluted like the nature of others. In this respect, we are all alike; we are born in sin, and alike are we dead by nature in trespasses and sins, heirs of wrath, even as others. Remember, too, that although you may not have sinned openly, as others have done, yet in your hearts you have, and it is by your hearts that you will be judged; for how often a man may commit adultery in his heart, and incur the guilt of theft, while his hands lay idly by his side! Do you not know that a look may have in it the essence of an unclean act, and that a thought may commit murder as well as a hand? God takes note of heart sin as well as hand sin. If you have been outwardly moral, I am thankful for it, and I ask *you* to be thankful for it too; but do not trust in it for Justification, seeing that you must be saved, even as the worst of criminals are saved, because in heart, if not in life, you have been as bad as they.

Moreover the method of pardon is the same in all cases. If you moralists are to be washed, where must you find the purifying bath? I never heard of but one fountain, that—

"Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

That fountain is for the dying thief as much as for you, and for you as much as for him. There is a robe of righteousness that is to cover the best living among professors—that same robe of righteousness covered Saul of Tarsus, the bloody persecutor. If you, of unspotted outward character, are ever to have a robe of righteousness, you must wear the same one as he wore; there cannot be another, nor a better! O you who are conscious of outward innocence, do, *do,* humble yourselves at the foot of the cross, and come to Jesus just as empty-handed, just as broken-hearted as if you had been outwardly among the vilest of the vile, and through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be saved, even as

they. O may the Holy Spirit bring you to this. I do not know whether anybody here has ever fallen into such an unwise thought as I have known some entertain. I met with a case of this sort only the other day. A very excellent and amiable young woman, when converted to God, said to me, "You know, sir, I used to almost wish that I was one of those very bad sinners whom you so often speak to, and invited to come to Jesus, because I thought then I should feel my need more: that was my difficulty, I could not feel my need." But see, dear friends, we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we who have not plunged into black sin, shall be saved even as they who have done so. Do not make a difficulty about this. Others make a difficulty on the opposite side; they say, "Oh, I could trust Christ if I had been kept from sin!" The fact is, that you unbelieving souls will not trust Christ whichever way you have lived, for from some quarter or other, you will find cause for your doubts; but when the Lord the Spirit gives you faith, you big sinners will trust Christ quite as readily as those who have not been openly great offenders; and you who have been preserved from open sin will trust Him as joyfully as the great transgressors. O come, come, come, you sick souls; come to my Master! Do not say, "We would come if we were worse." Do not say, "We would come if we were better." But come as you are; come just as you are. Oh, if you are a sinner, Christ invites you! If you are but lost, remember Christ came to save the lost! Do not be picking out your case, and making it to be different from others, but come, and welcome! Weary and heavy laden sinner, come, and welcome! Come, even now!—

"Just as you are, without one trace
Of love, or joy, or inward grace,
Or meetness for the heavenly place,
O guilty sinner, come!
Come, here bring your boding fears,
Your aching heart, your bursting tears;
'Tis mercy's voice salutes your ears,
O trembling sinner, come!
The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come;'
Rejoicing saints re-echo, 'Come;'
Who faints, who thirsts, who will, may come—
Your Savior bids you come!"

III. The text would not be fairly treated if I did not use it as THE CONFESSION OF THE GREAT OUTWARD SINNER WHEN CONVERTED.

I will now speak to those here present who, before conversion, indulged in gross sins. Such are here. Glory be to God, such are here! They have been washed; they have been cleansed. My dear brothers and sisters, I can rejoice over you; more precious are you by far in my eyes than all the precious gems which kings delight to wear, for you are my eternal joy and crown of rejoicing. You have experienced a divine change; you are not what you once were; you are new creatures in Christ Jesus. Now, I will speak for you. "*We* believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." What do we mean? Why, we be-

lieve that we shall be saved even as the best are saved. I will split that thought up, as it were, into individual instances. Yonder sits a very poor believer. We are very glad to see him at the Tabernacle. I know he had a thought that his clothes were hardly good enough to come in, but I hope none of you will ever stay away because of your clothes. Come, come anyhow; we are always glad to see you, at least, I am, if others are not. But my poor friend is very badly off indeed; he would not like anybody perhaps to see the room where he lives. Yes, but my dear brother, do you expect to have a poor man's salvation? Do you expect that when you get to heaven, you will be placed in a corner as a pauper pensioner? Do you think that Jesus Christ will only give you the crumbs which fall from off His table? "Oh, no!" I think I hear you say, "Oh, no! We shall leave our poverty when we get to glory." Some of our friends are rich. They have an abundance of this world's goods, and we rejoice to think they have, and hope that they will have grace to make a proper use of this mercy; but we poor people believe that we shall be saved, even as they. We do not believe that our poverty will make any difference to our share in divine grace, but that we shall be as much loved of God as they are, as much blessed in our poverty as they are in their riches, and as much enabled by divine grace to glorify God in our sphere as they are in theirs. We do not envy them, but on the contrary, ask grace from God that we may feel that if we are poor in pocket, yet we are rich in faith, and shall be saved, even as they.

Others of you are not so much poor in money as you are poor in useful talent. You come up to Chapel, and fill your seat, and that is about all you can do. You drop your weekly offering into the box, and when that is done, you have done all, or nearly all in your power. You cannot preach; you could not conduct a prayer meeting; you have hardly courage enough to give away a tract. Well, my dear friend, you are one of the timid ones, one of the little Benjamins of whom there are many. Now, do you expect that the Lord Jesus Christ will give you a second-hand robe to wear at His wedding feast? And when you sit at the banquet, do you think He will serve you from cold and inferior dishes? "Oh, no!" you say; "Oh, no! Some of our brothers and sisters have great talents, and we are glad that they have; we rejoice in their talents, but we believe that we shall be saved, even as they: we do not think that there will be any difference made in the divine distribution of loving-kindness because of our degree of ability." There are very proper distinctions here on earth between rich and poor, and between those who are learned and those who are unlearned; but we believe that there is no distinction in the matter of salvation—we shall be saved, even as they. Many of you would preach 10 times better than I do if you could only get your tongues unloosed to say what you feel. Oh, what red-hot sermons you would preach, and how earnest you would be in their delivery! Now, that sermon which you did not preach, and could not preach, shall not be set down to your account, while perhaps that discourse of mine will be a failure because I may not

have preached it as I should have done, with pure motives and zealous spirit. God knows what you would do if you could, and He judges not so much according to what you do, as according to your will to do it. He takes in this case, the will for the deed, and you shall be saved, even as they who with the tongue of fire proclaim the truths of God.

Most likely there is some doubting brother here. Whenever he opens "Our Own Hymn Book," he very seldom looks to "The Golden Book of Communion," but he generally turns to hymn No. 590, or thereabouts, and begins to sing "Contrite Cries." Well, my dear friend, you are a weakling; you are Mr. Much-Afraid, or Mr. Little-Faith; but how is your heart? What are your prospects? Do you believe that you will be put off with a second-rate salvation, that you will be admitted by the back door into heaven instead of through the gate of pearl? "Oh no!" you say; "I am the weakest lamb in Jesus' fold, but I believe that I shall be saved, even as they; that is, even as they who are the strongest in grace, most useful in labor, and most mighty in faith." In a few hours, dear friends, I shall be crossing the sea, and I will suppose that there shall be a good stiff wind, and that the vessel may be driven out of her course, and be in danger. As I walk the deck, I see a poor girl on board; she is very weak and ill, quite a contrast to that fine strong, burly passenger who is standing beside her, apparently enjoying the salt spray and the rough wind. Now, suppose a storm should come on—which of these two is the more safe? Well, I cannot see any difference, because if the ship goes to the bottom, they will both go, and if the ship gets to the other side of the channel, they will both land in security. The safety is equal when the thing upon which it depends is the same. So, if the weakest Christian is in the boat of salvation—that is, if he trusts Christ—he is as safe as the strongest Christian; because, if Christ failed the weak one, He would fail the strong one, too. Why, if the least Christian who believes in Jesus does not get to heaven, then Peter himself will not get to heaven! I am sure of it, that if the smallest star which Christ ever kindled does not blaze in eternity, then neither will the brightest star! If you who have given yourselves to Jesus should any of you be cast away, this would prove that Jesus is not able to save, and then all of us must be cast away too. Oh, yes! "We believe that we shall be saved, even as they."

I am nearly done, but I will suppose for a moment that there has been a work of grace in a prison—Cold Bath Fields, if you like. There are half-a-dozen villains there, thorough villains; but the grace of God has made new men of them. I think I see them; and, if they understood the text, as they looked across the room, and saw half a dozen apostles—Peter, James, John, Matthew, Paul, Bartholomew, and so on—they might say, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they, even as those apostles are." Can you catch the idea, and make it your own? When artists have drawn pictures of the apostles, they have often put a halo round their heads, very much like a brass pan, or something of that kind, as if to signify that they were some par-

ticular and special saints; but there was no such halo there—the painter is far from the fact; we say it, and say it seriously and thoughtfully, that 12 souls picked from the scum of creation who look to Christ, shall be saved, even as the 12 apostles are saved; halo or no halo, they shall join in the same hallelujah to God and the Lamb!

I will select three holy women: they shall be the three Marys that we read about in the Evangelists, the three Marys whom Jesus loved, and who loved Jesus. These holy women, we believe, will be saved. But I will suppose that I go to one of our Refuges, and there are three girls there who were once of evil fame: the grace of God has met with them, and they are now three weeping Magdalenes, penitent for sin. These three might say, humbly, but positively, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we three reclaimed harlots shall be saved, even as they—the three holy matrons who lived near Christ and were His delight." "Ah, well," says one, "this is divine grace, indeed! This is plain speech and wonderful doctrine, that God should make no distinction between one sinner and another when we come to Him through Christ." Dear hearer if you have understood this very simple statement, go to Jesus at once with your soul, and may God enable you to obtain complete salvation at this hour. I pray you to come in faith to the cross—I pray my Master's grace to compel you to enter into a state of full dependence upon Jesus, and so into a state of salvation. If you are now led to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter how black the past may have been, "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin."—

"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."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 8:23-38 AND 16,

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

BELIEVING TO SEE
NO. 766

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

"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Psalm 27:13.

I HAVE taken the whole verse for my text, but I am not sure that I shall keep to it. The words in it at which I catch are these, "Unless I had believed to see." Most people see to believe, but in David's case the process was reversed, and put into gospel order: he believed to see; and this is the keynote of our discourse. The prayer of my heart is, that some may be led to believe to see, and that those who have been trying to see in order to believe, may now come and trust in Jesus, and believe and see the grace of God.

Here we have in the words I select for the text, *a doctrine stated,* many *difficulties removed,* and some *directions afforded* for the Christian life.

I. We have here before us a fundamental truth of God and DOCTRINE of our faith, that *the great act by which a man is saved, so far as he is concerned, is the act of faith.* That is to say, he gives up all other righteousness, and casts himself upon the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment he does that, he is saved; his past sins are forgiven him; his future is secure. That one simple act of confidence in Jesus, insignificant as it may appear to be, is the dawn of spiritual life, the evidence of security, the token of eternal salvation. And here is the reason for this, namely, that faith is God's appointed mark which He sets upon His favored ones, and by this may a man know whether he is saved or not, whether he is ordained unto eternal life or not, by his answer to this one question—"Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?" Or, in other words, "Do you trust in the Son of God?"

The case is ordered in this wise—we have sinned, we have broken God's law—God's law must be honored. Sin cannot be committed without a penalty being inflicted. The Lord Jesus Christ determined and stipulated in the covenant of grace, that He would take upon Himself the form of man, and that He would suffer for the chosen many, even for His people, what they had deserved to suffer themselves on account of their sins, or a punishment that would be equivalent to that suffering. In due time the Lord Jesus Christ appeared; true to His word of promise He went up to Calvary—there He received at God's hands that which was due from His people to the great offended judge. There He paid their debts. There, once and for all, He took the handwriting of ordinances that was against them, and put it away, nailing it to His cross. Now, virtually, all for whom Christ died were then saved; their debts were then paid; their punish-

ment was then discharged. The debt due to the sovereign justice of God was then altogether borne, and Jesus Christ, then and there, "finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness" for His people. This man, by His one offering, has perfected forever them who were set apart. Once yielding His soul unto death, and giving Himself up as a sacrifice for men, He then and there saved His people as before the bar of God. These saved ones are known by their being brought to trust in Him; as their once dead but now ever-living Lord. Without faith in Christ, my hearer, you have no share in His blood; you have no interest in His righteousness. What He did upon the cross will have nothing to do in saving you. All His griefs, and groans, and pangs, you will have no share in. Your debts remain unpaid. Your punishment has not been borne for you. You will have to endure the wrath of God forever.

In the prison of hell you will be forever bound in chains of fire. Inasmuch as you have not believed, you have no share in the atonement of Jesus Christ. But if you have come and trusted yourself with Christ, if, fully convinced that there is salvation nowhere else, you believe in Him, then your debts are paid. The punishment of your sin has been endured. You can never suffer, for God cannot punish two for one offense. You can never be summoned to God's bar to be tried for your life. You are clear. Through Jesus' blood you are ransomed; you are justified, accepted, adopted, saved. Who shall lay anything to your charge, seeing that Christ has died for you, and made a propitiation for your sin? Now the whole of this hinges upon a man's believing; if he believes, then the great gospel truth is *that he is saved.* Throughout the entire Bible this is the one ray of light that comes out of the darkness to poor troubled man. "He who believes on Him is not condemned." "He who believes on Him has everlasting life." "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." These assertions occur over, and over, and over again, so that I may safely say that this is *the* gospel—that he who believes is saved, and that the faith by which he lays hold of Christ, is to him proof positive that he is saved. He has God's word for it that he is redeemed in Christ.

II. We have now briefly stated the doctrine, but the main part of my subject will be to try and remove those many DIFFICULTIES which people newly awakened and quickened are sure to raise. The doctrine is, that he who believes is saved; but men ask a thousand questions about it, and see as many more difficulties—let us therefore try to meet and answer some of them.

1. And, first, how often do we hear it said, "I cannot think that I am saved; I do not trust in Jesus Christ—I am sure of it, and fear I am not saved, *because I feel no worthiness in me."* This is a difficulty which we can slay at once. If you did feel any worthiness in yourself, then you might rest assured that you were not saved; because nothing is clearer in God's word than the fact that salvation is not by merit but by divine grace. The apostle Paul is very clear upon this point. He says, "It is not by works, but of grace;" and if any say, it may be partly of each, he says,

"No; if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it is of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Salvation is altogether, from first to last, a gratuitous act of GRACE; hence you do not need to look for any merit in yourself.

The case is parallel with this—it is sometimes the custom, when a new king attains to the throne, for a general amnesty to be proclaimed, and for all the prison doors to be opened. This is done, of course, not on account of the *merit* of the prisoners, but to do honor to the great mercy of the king. Now, I think I see you, troubled one, sitting as a prisoner in a cell, and the door is opened to you, and you are told that you are free, because the king would honor the day of his coronation; but you reply, "I cannot believe that I am free, *for I do not feel that I deserve it;* the sentence which was passed upon me was one which I richly deserved and according to justice; I cannot, therefore, walk through that prison door, because I know that I have done nothing to merit my discharge." But, man, if the ground of your discharge is not in any degree your merit, but only to the honor of the king, how simple-minded you are to sit on that stone slab any longer! Up with you, man! Walk out; take your liberty, and do honor to the king's bounty! O sinner, you have no merit, that is true, but God forgives you to the praise and glory of His grace, to the honor of His dear Son, to give Him a coronation. Come, then, walk out at liberty!

Or it is as though this should happen—someone who has consumption has applied for admission to enter, say into Brampton Hospital. By-and-by this person obtains the order, but no sooner does she get it than she is afraid to use it. She does not dare go to the hospital, and why? "Because," she says, *"I am not in good health."* Now, we answer at once, "But if you were in good health, you would have no need of a hospital; it is, in fact, your sickness and your bad health which give you any right to enter there." So, when you tell me that you have no merit, my reply is, but if you had any, you would not need a Savior! Your demerit renders yours a suitable case to be met with by the merit of the Savior. It is your *sinnership* which, if there is any fitness, is your fitness. Not your righteousness, sinner, but your guilt must be your plea when you wish to be pardoned. If money is to be given away, men do not urge their being possessed of riches as a reason why they should receive the charity, but one cries, "I am exceedingly poor," and another says, "I am poorer still." It is their poverty, not their substance, which is their plea with the generous heart. And so it is between God and you. Not your fullness, but your emptiness; not your goodness, but your badness; not your merit, but your demerit; these you must plead before God, seeing that salvation is by grace.

Now, then, what do you say, sinner? God tells you that if you believe in Christ, you are saved. Is God a liar or not? I must push that with you. Does God speak truth or not? As for this trumpery objection of yours, that you have no merit, I have shown you that it is without a foundation, for if you had any merit, then why should you come to God for mercy?

But, meritless, worthless, altogether without any goodness, still the text says, "Blessed is he who works not, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly." What do you say—will you take God at His word, and believe what He says to be true?

2. But I hear another objection, one which is very frequently made indeed. Someone says, *"But I want to see* in myself the evidences of salvation; I know that when a man is saved, there very soon appear in his character certain signs and tokens which mark the work of the Holy Spirit, and I cannot believe that I am saved on the mere word of God; I want to see the evidences of it." I will tell you a story then. When the Emperor Napoleon the First, was one day reviewing his troops on what is now called the *Place de la Concorde,* sitting on his horse, and thinking of other things, he let go of the bridle, and in a moment his high spirited charger galloped away with him. A private in the ranks saw the danger, rushed from his place, seized the bridle, and saved the life of the emperor, who said to him, "Thank you, *Captain,"* and went on. "Of what regiment, sire?" asked the soldier. "Of my guards," was the reply. Now, it was a strange thing that the Emperor should in a moment make him a captain for so small an act as that, and stranger still that the man should so simply and fully believe him as not to doubt for a minute, but ask at once of what regiment he was to be the captain. Now, what do you suppose the soldier did? Going back to his regiment, he put down his gun, and said, "Whoever likes may take care of that," and walking across the review ground up to the staff, he joined with them. A general looking round at him said, "What does that fellow want?" "That fellow is a captain of the guard," said the man, and gave the military salute. "You are mad, friend!" "I am not mad; I am a captain of the guard." "Who said so?" "He said so," pointing to the Emperor riding along. "I beg your pardon," replied the general, and recognized him at once in his new office. The man took the Emperor at his word. He wore no shoulder ornaments; he was not adorned with any gold lace; he had not received any of a captain's pay; he had passed through no formal ceremony; but the Emperor had simply called him "captain," and that was enough for him.

Now, I want to know whether the Lord Jesus Christ's word is not as well worth taking as the word of the Emperor Napoleon. When he says to you, "believe; he who believes has everlasting life," the proper way for you to act is to feel and say, "That is true; I have everlasting life; although, as yet, I have not a jot of evidence of any other kind; yet if He has said it, that is enough for me. Though I may have come in here an ungodly, unconverted sinner, yet, since I have learned to trust the Savior this night, and do trust him, then I am saved, I will try to get these evidences by-and-by." I have no doubt that that soldier I told you of very soon began to look after his uniforms. He would not like to continue dressed as a private after that, but would want an officer's uniform, and to appear in the army as a captain should appear. And so will it be with you by-and-by; but at first, my dear friends, your faith must be grounded on the word of Jesus Christ, and on nothing else. Perhaps the devil will say to you,

"What is that fellow doing here?" Tell the devil and all his angels, "HE said it who died on the cross! HE said it who reigns in heaven, that 'Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.'" Stand to it, that if He said it, that is enough. You have the King's word for it; the imperial word, the word of the blessed and only Potentate who cannot lie.

So, then, it is sufficient evidence to the believing heart that it has God's word to rely upon. Let me point you to the 36th verse of the third chapter of John: "He who believes on the Son has everlasting life." And to the 18th verse of the same chapter, "He who believes on Him is not condemned." Are not these words quite sufficient, though as yet no other evidence can be seen? But sometimes I have heard persons saying, "Well, but we must have evidences; we cannot trust Christ without them." And consequently they try to manufacture signs of grace, whereas, be it never forgotten, that *evidences are the product of faith, and not the cause of faith.* You go into a room at winter time, and you say to yourself, "There is not enough heat in this room; I must try to make it warmer," and you set to work, by some plan or other, to do this. You say there is no evidence of there being a fire because there is no heat; true, but you will never make the heat *produce* the fire. Would it not be much better to go and look to the fire at once? And then you would get the heat which is the *result* of a fire. So you say, "I am not so earnest, so reverent, so prayerful, so penitent as I should be, therefore I cannot believe." Now, would it not be better to say, "If I believed more, I would have more of these evidences; therefore let me go to my faith, which is the cause of the evidences, and not go to my evidences to get faith out of them"?

It is as though you had a piece of ground, and you said to yourself, "Well, now, here are these trees; they produce very little fruit—if I could secure a large crop, that would be evidence that the soil is good. I must put fresh fruit on the trees, and then that will prove that the ground is fertile." Not at all! Make the soil good, and then the fruit will come naturally. So with your faith; faith is the soil in which the fruits of faith must grow. Do not be thinking about the evidences. Think about the faith that will grow the evidences. Seek to go to Christ, and trust in Him, and you will get the signs of divine grace soon enough. Your main business is with Jesus, not with evidences. Rest in Him—His finished work and ascension power—and, if you depend there, without evidences, you will soon have plenty of them; but, if you look to external or other signs in order to get faith, you look, as I have already told you, in the wrong place, and reverse the order of grace. To use an old proverb you "put the cart before the horse." You do not go logically and properly to work. Trust in Christ for evidences, and you will have plenty of them in due time.

3. Commonly enough we hear people say, *"I need to have a deeper repentance, and then I could believe that I am saved."* Christ says, "He who believes is saved." You say, "Well, that is what Christ says, but I am not satisfied with that." Oh, atrocious thing! To make Christ a liar and suspect His word! Still, you say you need a deeper repentance. Now, you are

very like a man who is in a high fever, and delirious, and he cries out, "I need to feel that I am in this fever; I need to know the top and the bottom of this typhus; I need to know when it goes, and how it will go." But the doctor says, "Never mind, my dear friend; never mind the typhus; just trust to me; take the medicine." He calms the man's mind by reminding him that if he had not the typhus, he would not need the doctor; but now that the fever is there, it is not for him to know the disease so much as to trust the remedy; and when he gets well, he will understand about it better. So, poor sinner, till you have come to Christ, your repentance is not worth a penny! If you had a ton weight of it, your repentance would be of no value till you trusted Jesus! We must get you well first, and then you shall know about the disease. Trust Jesus, and believe His word, and do not, in your delirium, be looking for those dark experiences which would not comfort you, though you think they would.

There is a man who has written a very offensive letter to a very kind friend who has often obliged him. This friend, when he received the letter, said, "Well, it was very wrong of you to write this letter, but I freely forgive you." But the other said, "I do not think my friend has forgiven me, because I do not feel regretful enough; if I felt more repentant, then I should think that he had forgiven me." As if his friend's forgiveness were not quite well enough assured to him by his friend's word! But now, supposing that man should bring himself to believe that his friend had forgiven him? Why, then he would find it an easy matter to repent, because he would say to himself, "Has my friend been kind enough to overlook so great a fault? Then how wrong it was of me to have written so against him! How grieved, how shocked I am to think that I should have fallen into such an offense against so generous a friend!" My dear hearers, you cannot get repentance by refusing to believe Christ's word. Trust Him! Trust Him, and believe that you are saved, and then the sluices will be drawn up, and you will repent. You will see Jesus Christ dying that you might live, and you will ask, "Did I slaughter that blessed Savior; did I wound Him; did I scourge Him, and put Him to death? Then monstrous sins, away with you, away with you!" You must first believe, and then repentance will come—not look to repentance as being the evidence, but look to Jesus, and to Jesus only, and, looking to Him, repentance will follow as a matter of course.

4. Then, running to the other extreme, we have heard many troubled ones say, "I cannot think that I am saved *because I do not feel great joy;* if I had greater joy, then I would know that I was forgiven." Somebody has left you a large estate, and you say to yourself, "Well, I have just read the letter in which the lawyer tells me that I am left a large estate, but, somehow or other, I do not believe it, for if it were true, I should feel greater joy about it." Why, you talk like a fool, sir! If you believed it, you would feel joy. It is because you do not believe it that you do not have joy. You turn the thing upside down, and want your joy to help your faith, whereas your joy must flow from your faith, and cannot possibly contribute to it. So, man, if you will come and trust my Lord's word, and

believe that you are saved because you trust Him, then you will have joy. You cannot be without joy. If you believed tonight that your sins were pardoned, would you not be glad? Certainly you would! Well, then, believe it. If you are trusting Christ, if you are resting wholly upon Jesus, He tells you that you are saved. Do not begin to say, "I have not the bliss I hoped to have." You shall have that joy when you have looked for it, and have looked alone to Christ.

5. Then, I have known others who have said, "I could believe that I am saved if *I had more sanctification*." That also is the wrong way to go to work. In a sweet little book which I have read lately, the writer well remarks, "Suppose you were in Brazil, and you were in some of those brooks where diamonds are occasionally picked up, and you found a large unpolished one; no matter how rough it might be, if you knew it to be a diamond, you would get it polished; but if you had any suspicion about it, you would not be likely to incur the expense and trouble of polishing it. It is your assurance of its being a diamond that would set you to work to take it to the lapidary to have it put upon a seal, and set." So we find salvation, and when we get it, it is a rough, uncouth thing. We need to have it, as we say, sanctified. Now, if we believe it is a diamond, if we believe that it is really and truly salvation, we shall then be in earnest to get that salvation perfected, to have the diamond's facets all made to glitter in the light of heaven. But so long as we have any doubts about the matter, we shall not think, nor be troubled, about perfecting our salvation. The fact is, that strong faith is the great sanctifying agent through the Power of the Holy Spirit, and the application of the precious blood of Jesus. You will never overcome your sins by doubting Christ. You will never get sanctification by putting your holiness into the place of Christ's righteousness. It is no faith to believe that I am saved being sanctified; but it is faith to believe that I, being sanctified, and with all my sins about me, am still saved through the precious blood of Jesus. O sinner, do not look to sanctification to back up the testimony of God's word. God's word is enough! O take it; rest upon it. Remember, you dishonor God when you need any other evidence except His naked word. What would you, dear friends, think of this in your own case? You promise your child a present, and he wants evidences. You tell him that you love him, and he wants you to call to him somebody else to bear witness to it. Shame on your naughty child, or else there must be something ill about yourself. Now, as we cannot lay the blame on our heavenly Father, who is too wise to err, too good to be unkind, shame on us that we should be saying we need something else to make us believe God's word. O beloved, let us believe Him when we cannot see it; and if we do not feel that we are saved, let us believe the word which says we are, seeing it is the word of Christ. I like that in Martin Luther. He says the devil said to him once, "Martin, do you feel that you are saved?" "No, I do not," he said, "but I am quite as sure of it as if I did; get you behind me, Satan!" And that is the true way. Do you feel that you are saved? No, I do not expect to feel it; it is a matter of belief. I trust my Lord and Master. It is very sweet to

get feelings; but Mr. Live-by-Feeling, as you well remember, according to John Bunyan, was a Diabolian, and was hanged. I wish he had been hanged to better purpose, for he still lives about these parts. If you live by feeling, it is miserable living. It is poverty sometimes, and riches at others. But if you live by faith upon the Son of God, who loved you, and gave Himself for you, that is blessed living! O for divine grace to do this, not to see to believe, but to believe to see! Put believing first, and repentance, sanctification, evidences and all else, will come afterwards.

6. I shall not weary you, I hope, if I mention that there are some who say they cannot trust Christ, cannot believe His affirmation that they are saved, *because they do not feel more love for Him.* They are like a child who should say, "I do not believe my father's word because I do not feel so much love for him as I ought to do." Oh, but, my Child, if you believed your father's word, a true and good love would come as the consequence! And, sinner, while you are saying, "I cannot believe because I cannot love," you are putting things altogether out of gear. That is neither God's method nor the way of wisdom at all. Go, and believe your Father, and then you shall feel a flame of love within your heart which you have never known before.

7. But another one says, "I could believe that I were saved if *I had more of likeness to Christ about me."* Here again, you see, Christ has said, "He who believes has everlasting life," and you say, "No, Lord, I do not agree with that, I believe that he who is like You has everlasting life, and I cannot see that I am like You, though I once hoped I would be; and therefore I cannot think that I am saved." That is to say, Christ and you differ in opinion, and you set your, "No," up against Christ's, "Yes." Oh, down, down, down with your proud, "No," and just take this sweet assurance, that "He who believes on Him is not condemned!" Now, here is a man who has been cutting a seal, and making your crest, but when you come to stamp your letters with it, you find that the impression is very bad, that it is not your crest at all. You cannot make out what it is. It may be a crest, but it is not at all like one. Well, what will you do? Will you try to polish up your wax, and so make the impression like what you wanted it to be? Would it not be a great deal wiser if you were to get the seal altered? Would not that set it all right directly? If you were to send the seal back to the man who cut the die, and get him to make the seal properly, would not the stamp then be right? Now, how do we get likeness to Christ? Why, it is faith which puts the stamp there, and instead of saying, "The impression upon my character is not like Christ, therefore I must try to alter it," my dear friend, think about your faith; go to Christ, and through Him get your faith altered; and when the stamp is set right, then the impression will be perfect. There is no holiness, no true holiness apart from faith. It is not by doubting that we come to be holy. I never could overcome a sin by saying, "I am afraid I am not a child of God." The devil knows this, and consequently whenever he can get us alone, he always begins with this, "If you are the son of God." He did this with our Lord, and if he could have led our Lord to doubt whether He

was God's Son, we know not what might have come of it, for certainly when he gets us to doubt whether we are children of God, then we very soon glide into other sins. But when we can say to him, "Now, Satan, I am not ignorant of your devices; I know you are about to tell me of my unfaithfulness and of my great sin; I know all that, but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses me from all sin; you may paint me as filthy as yourself, and filthier, too, if it so pleases you, and I will acknowledge that it is true; but then I will remind you that Christ has said, 'I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your transgressions.'" Why, you are more than a match for the devil then!

O brothers and sisters let us take Christ's word as we find it. I bring you back to the story I told you about the Emperor and the soldier; and seeing He has said that we are saved, let us believe we are. If we have nothing else to prove it, let us stand to it before angels and devils, the assembled courts of heaven and of hell, all joined together, and say, "I have God's word for it, and I would put God's word even before an angel's word; if Christ has said I am saved, then I am saved; if He has declared that the believer has eternal life, I do believe; I do trust in Jesus, and therefore I have eternal life, and I cannot perish; neither can anyone pluck me out of Christ's hands." Now, that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. I would to God you had grace to receive it! I pray that every one of us may be brought to depend upon the veracity of God and the merit of Jesus, and then, believing to see, instead of seeing to believe, we shall be sustained, and comforted, and greatly blessed.

III. And now I have a FEW DIRECTIONS TO GIVE TO MORE ADVANCED BELIEVERS upon the same subject.

Beloved in the Lord, *the whole course of the Christian's life must be believing to see.* We walk by faith, and not by sight. I hope the day may soon come when the noble example which has been set by our esteemed brother, Mr. Muller, of Bristol, will be more constantly followed in the entire Lord's work; for rest assured, that if we will but believe to see, we shall see great things. I cannot forbear mentioning to you tonight what God has enabled us to see of late as a church. We met together one Monday night, as you will remember, for prayer concerning the Orphanage, and it was not a little remarkable that, on the Saturday of that week, God should have moved some friend who knew nothing of our prayers, to give 500 pounds to that cause. It astonished some of you that, on the following Monday, God should have moved another to give 600 pounds! When I told you of that at the next prayer meeting, you did not think, perhaps, that God had something else in store, and the following Tuesday another friend came with 500 pounds! It was just the same in the building of this house. We were a few and poor people when we commenced, but still we moved on by faith, and never went into debt. We trusted in God, and the Tabernacle was built, to the eternal honor of the God who hears and answers prayer. And, mark you, it will be so in the erection of this Orphan House. We shall see greater things than these if

only our faith will precede our sight. But if we go upon the old custom of our general societies, and first look out for regular income, and get our subscribers, and send round our collectors, and pay our percentages—that is, do not trust God, but trust our subscribers—if we go on that rule, we shall see very little, and have no room for believing. But if we shall just trust God, and believe that God never did leave a work that He put us upon, and never sets us to do a thing without meaning to help us through with it, we shall soon see that the God of Israel lives, and that His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that He cannot hear. Brothers and sisters let us remember Israel when they came to the Red Sea. There it was, a roaring, billowy sea; but they were bid to march through it, and they did march; and though the waters roared before them fiercely, yet as soon as the priests' feet touched the flood, the depths stood upright on a heap, and the waters were congealed in the heart of the sea. And so shall it be with you, brothers and sisters, and with your faith. Believe in God, and face your difficulties, and they shall flee before you. Then, remember the Egyptians. They decided to do the same thing. They thought, "Oh, that is all right; we will do as these have done before us." But notice, they said this because all their difficulties had been cleared away. There was the Red Sea all dry before them. Any fool could march through there! But, unfortunately, while faith can march through a sea dry-shod, unbelief only begins to march when it is all dry, and presently, unbelief gets drowned. Unbelief needs to see, and God strikes it blind. Faith does not need to see, and God opens its eyes, and it sees God, ever present to help and deliver it. Now, you who are working for Christ, and you who are troubled in your business, you who are in any way challenged, remember the life of faith. Remember that you are not called to walk by sight, but by faith! Like David, believe to see, and great shall be your joy.

Now, beloved Christian brothers and sisters, *the same thing must happen in our inward conflicts.* If we want to grow in divine grace, we shall not do so by humbling ourselves, as we call it. The way to make advances in divine life is to believe that you can only grow in grace by God's Spirit; to believe that since Jesus Christ is yours, all things are yours. My brother, my sister, have you a bad temper? You will never overcome that temper by saying, "I cannot overcome it." But if, by faith, you are able to say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," you will overcome it yet. No sin is ever slain by your saying, "Oh, it is my disposition; it is *natural* to me." I know it is, and all manner of wickedness is natural to us, but you have to rest upon a supernatural arm—you are a twice-born man. You are a new creature, and you must not sit down in peace in any form of sin, but believe that you can overcome it by the power of your faith, and of the Holy Spirit that is in you. Believe, in order to see yourselves growing in grace; believe, to see yourselves conquering sin in the name of Christ, and you shall do so.

And again, with regard to *our perplexities in doctrines and matters of faith,* you must apply the same rule. Believe first, and then you will see

the truth as it is in Jesus. How often the Christian comes across a passage of Scripture which seems to be dark and mysterious. He cannot for a time understand its preciousness, nor behold its beauty; but though he cannot see the golden ore, he knows that it is there; and, like one who searches for gold amidst the nuggets of quartz where it is embedded, in due time he will be enriched. It will not do to cast it away because nothing at present is seen; for before long the full value of it shall be known. The Christian drinks water from a well which is deep and by nothing but faith's long arm can reach down so as to draw the living water. It is no surface supply which will do for us; down deep in the depths of God's spiritual truths, where no hand of reason can reach, we can let down our faith, and the clear, fresh water will be drawn up to refresh our thirsty souls. If ever you are in a difficulty, bring faith to bear upon the truth of God first, and you will understand and see afterwards. It depends upon which end of the telescope you use first and put to your eye, how much you will see of the landscape; and the lengths and breadths of the truth of God are only discovered when faith is first of all brought into exercise.

Remember, moreover, my beloved brothers and sisters that our *only safeguard in times of prosperity* is to exercise faith beforehand. Our text says, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Expect great things from God, work for them, and believe that God intends to do good to you. David was not taken by surprise when he saw God's goodness. He had always believed in it; and when the full tide of divine beneficence met his view he was not overcome, for he always, by faith, comprehended it. You, my brothers and sisters, now high up in the mountain, still let your faith lead your eye upwards and you will not grow giddy and fall. Walk by faith, and you will find yourself safe alike in trouble and in joy. In the night of adversity it will be as a pillar of fire to give you light, and in the daytime it will refresh you with its sheltering shade all through the wilderness. Believe, and you shall see without fainting, "the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

And once more, beloved, we are on our journey to the skies. We are on our way to heaven, and if we want to have a foretaste of it, how shall we get it? We must not believe in heaven only because we have had enjoyments on the road—*we must believe that there is a heaven because God has promised it,* and we must go after it because the word declares there is a great reward; and there, if we believe to see, we shall, even in this life, soon see something of that which we have believed.

Brothers and sisters, we are tonight like Columbus in search of the New World. Eye has not seen it, ear has not heard it; but we believe in it, and in our frail vessels we have launched, leaving the world behind us. Unbelief sometimes tells us that there is no goodly country, no land of life-unending, no city of the blessed, no haven of peace, no "Jerusalem the golden." We have never seen it, but we believe in it. God has said it in His word—"There remains therefore a rest for the people of God." Therefore, up with all sail! Steersman, hold to the wheel! We are bound for an-

other and a better land. We have no abiding city on that shore which we have left. If we were mindful of it, we might return to it; but we have left it once and for all, and we are now steering for the land which eye has not seen. And you know what happened to Columbus. It is happening to some here—to some of my gray-headed brothers and sisters. Ah, and young as I am, I also know something of that which I am about to describe. When Columbus was drawing near to the shores of America, though he could not see the land, yet he marked the land birds flying round and round the masts, and lighting upon the cordage of the vessels, and he pointed up and said, "That is a bird that is not seen far out at sea; there is land somewhere!" His companions had been ready to throw him overboard, and make back for Spain; but they thought better of it now. And by-and-by there came floating along weeds and branches of land produce, and they said, "Ah, after all, the old-fashioned navigator is right. We shall come to the land of gold!"

Now sometimes God gives us blessed foretastes, happy earnests, delightful tokens, that there is a better land, till some of us, having believed to see, are almost come to see. I envy some of my dear friends who have been long in the divine life, and are getting gray, because I know that the angels often bring them bundles from the hills of myrrh, and make glad their spirits with tastes of the wines on the lees well refined, which are reserved for the feasts of the immortals when they sit down in the banqueting halls of the eternal, and see the King in His beauty, and bask in the vision of His glory. Oh, let us go on, we who are younger, who have scarcely begun the voyage, knowing that all is well! Storms may toss us about; waves may dash against our hull; the billows may seem as if about to swallow us up. But our fathers have gained the beach. Their ships, like those of Columbus, are drawn up on yonder shore. They are safe and blessed. Listen! We can almost hear their song. Their, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigns!" might almost be heard even here, were not this earth so full of noise, were not the whirl of the wheels of business so incessant. Let us, then, O let us believe to see, and we shall soon see it, and glorify Him who taught us so to believe. May God bless you, dear friends, very richly in this believing to see, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 3:14-36.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE ECHO
NO. 767

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT SURREY CHAPEL, BLACKFRIAR'S ROAD.

"When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said to You, Your face, Lord, will I seek."
Psalm 27:8.

THIS ready response to a divine call may be looked at in three ways. It may be said of it, first, *that it is the natural duty of man to God, such as his responsibility to his Creator demands.* I would not like to think it necessary to prove that statement in this assembly. Surely when God creates a man, it is but a matter of right that the man created should answer to the call of his Maker. When the Creator says, "Seek you My face," it is the natural duty of the creature to reply, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." And the more is this so, because our Creator renews our obligations hourly by exercising His sustaining power, and maintaining our existence. In a certain sense we are "created" every day, because the creature would go back to its native nothingness, our bodies would return to the dust, and our spirits would expire, if it were not for a continued action of divine omnipotence, by which we are retained in being. Being, therefore, every day, dependent upon the preserver of men, it is but an everyday obligation that when God says, "Seek you My face," the daily debtor should cheerfully reply, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." If any should say that this is not a duty on such grounds, I would reply that the commands of God are always so good and so reasonable, that it must be the duty of man to obey them. If it were possible for the Most High to command anything unrighteous, or unreasonable, the question of His claims might be raised; but since what the word of God commands is always most to our interest, at once the wisest and the best thing that we could possibly do, it becomes the duty of a rational and an intelligent being to follow the wise, loving, and tender counsels of the great God; and when his heavenly Father bids him seek His face, he should readily answer, "Your face, Lord, will I seek."

But, while I am quite sure that this is the case, and dare never say otherwise, *yet, although prompt obedience is a duty, wherever it exists, it is a work of the Holy Spirit.* There never was a mere man in this world, since the days of Adam, who ever did heartily make the reply mentioned in the text unless the Holy Spirit made him willing to do so in the day of God's power. We do not excuse those who are disobedient; but if any are obedient, the glory of their obedience must be given to the Holy Spirit, who works all our works in us, and makes us both to will and to do of the Lord's good pleasure. We are quite certain that in our own case this was so, for the Lord said to us, "Seek you My face," hundreds and thousands of times, in our infancy, in His own word, both when we read it, and when we heard it preached, but we would not reply to the demand of

God, but set our faces, like a flint, and went after our own devices; but when He spoke effectually, with that still small voice of the Holy Spirit, which penetrates the soul, enlightens the understanding, sweetly bows the will, constrains the affections, and changes the nature, then it was, but never till then, that we said, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." We heartily join in Mr. Bonar's sweet verses—

"All that I was, my sin, my guilt,
My death, was all my own;
All that I am, I owe to You,
My gracious God, alone.
The evil of my former state
Was mine, and only mine;
The good in which I now rejoice
Is Thine and only Thine.
The darkness of my former state,
The bondage—all were mine;
The light of life in which I walk,
The liberty—is Thine."

And, therefore, in the third place, *we may always view such a spirit as our text indicates as being an evidence of election, an evidence of a saving interest in divine grace.* How can we tell the Lord's people? They are discovered by the Lord's call. The call is general, and put in the plural, "Seek *you* My face," but the response to it is personal, put in the singular, "Your face, Lord, will *I* seek." This becomes, sooner or later, the answer of every chosen soul. Everyone ordained unto eternal life receives, in due time, the new nature, and this living and incorruptible seed, hearing the gospel of its great author, responds to it as an echo to the voice.

There is a very excellent image which is sometimes used to illustrate this truth of God. When our brave King Richard was shut up in prison, far away in Germany, you know how he was found out by Blondel, a troubadour. The king and the minstrel had composed a song between them. First the minstrel sang one verse, and then the king sang one, and no other man the whole world over knew what the verses were except the king and the minstrel. So the minstrel wandered through many realms, and sang the first verse of his song, sang it at all kinds of castle gates and dungeon doors, but there came no response, for the king was not within; but at the last, as providence would have it, he sang it in the right place, and faintly from within he heard from the deep dungeon the voice which knew, and could sing, the second verse, and as he sang the third, and the fourth came through the iron bars, he knew that the king was there, for the verses could have been sung by no other than he. I am sometimes occupied in preaching the gospel, and I preach it to thousands who give no response—here is no evidence of the Lord's having chosen them. But another time there is a heart that says, "You say, 'Seek you My face.' My reply is, 'Your face, Lord, will I seek.'" Then I have found out the Lord's chosen ones, found out the hidden ones, discovered as many as were ordained unto eternal life, for their believing is the response to God's gospel, and the evidence of their being the favorites of heaven. They and they alone, thus believe. As for those who believe not, they perish in their sins; "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."

Look, then, at the text, in these three ways. I should be happy if I felt that you would all accept it in these lights, for I find too much of chopping and choosing among Christians between this truth of God and that, and, by the Lord's help, I am determined, so far as I know it, to pander to no man or set of men, but to hold myself ever free to preach every truth that I find in my Master's Bible. You may call it Arminianism, or Calvinism, or whatever ism you like, yet, if it is in this Book, you shall have to account for it at the last great day, whether you receive it or not. I say, again, then, that the obedience of the text is but the natural duty of man, but wherever it is carried out, it is by the work of the Spirit alone, and wherever it exists, it is an evidence of election, a proof of the indwelling of the grace of God in the soul.

But I intend to handle the text in another way, and shall endeavor to speak of the spirit of loving obedience to God's word which this text breathes. I shall first say something *upon the absence of that spirit;* then *upon the cultivation of that spirit;* then upon *a special outlet for that spirit;* and, lastly, upon *a reward for that spirit.*

I. First, then, let me make a few remarks upon THE ABSENCE OF THIS SPIRIT IN SO MANY PERSONS.

Ah, my dear friends, it is mournful to think how few there are who can say, "When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said to You, Your face, Lord, will I seek," for the great mass of men, if they spoke honestly, would have to confess, "When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said to You, Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice? I know not the Lord neither will I be obedient to Him." With some of you now present this has mournfully been the case. There has been in your heart a total absence of every response to the divine word. It has come to you in all sorts of ways, till it might be asked, "What further can be done for you?" You heard it from a mother's tender lips, and she spoke it as no one else could have done. You had it after that in your own flesh, when through sickness you tossed on your bed. You had it afterwards from kind teachers, from earnest ministers. Some of you get a good word almost every day. The very glance of your wife is a loving, constant sermon. Some of you are not without sharp pricks of conscience—the stabs of that sharp little dagger within your soul that would gladly slay your sins. But, for all this, there has been no answer to God's call. You have lived for vanity, if not for sin. You are neglecting the great salvation. He says, "Seek you My face." It is the cry of all these houses of prayer which are open every Sunday, "Seek you My face," but your answer has been, "I will seek anything but the face of God."

And *this has been continued with some of you.* Oh, that I should have to put this so seriously! You have done this, not for a week—a week is a long time for a sinful creature to hold out against God—but you have done this for months, yes, and even for years. A year is a long time for a child to hold out against its father. How few monarchs can keep their patience with a besieged city for 12 or 14 years: "No," they say, "we will drag each stone from its place, and hang every citizen in the city by the

neck." Their patience soon grows cold and their wrath waxes hot. But God has laid siege to some of you, by the instrumentality of the gospel, for 30, 40, 50, 60—did the little bird say 70 years?—and all the time you have continued to give God the negative. And while the demands of friends, and the requests of kindred, have been complied with, that wonderful word, "Seek you My face," has received from you nothing but the cold reply, "With God I will have nothing to do." "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, 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." Oh, wonder of deep ingratitude—man, year after year turns a deaf ear to the sweet commands of divine grace!

Now, in some of you, this cold negative has been disturbed a little, but not broken. Perhaps, from this very pulpit, some of you have heard appeals which have considerably shaken you. Many of us, before conversion, were frequently the subjects of impressions, and some of you unconverted ones are not long without them. Christ has knocked at your door, and you have heard His voice again and again. You are not long without such knocks. Christ has often knocked. He *stands at the door and knocks,* as the Scripture says. He does not knock and walk away, but He stands at the door and knocks. The knocks have been repeated and continued, and you have frequently but falsely said, "I will open." You have vowed that you would change and turn. Shall all those vows be registered against you? Shall all those resolutions help to increase your doom, being evidence of your trifling with God, and attempting to deceive the omniscient One? O sinner, how much has been done for you? What more can be done for you, vain man? What more shall be done for you, careless woman? It is useless that you should be stricken any more—you will revolt more and more. You have suffered and you have smarted, till your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint, and God's rod has made you smart till you are full of wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores; but still you do not turn! I have this much to say to you, and then I shall have to leave you to go to another part of the text. There is in this Book a very terrible passage which I commend to you who have up to now declined to accede to the divine word—you will find it in the First chapter of Proverbs, at the 24th verse, "Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes; when your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish comes upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that who hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." That is the voice of God to you, sinner, you who have said, "I will not serve the Lord." Take that bitter morsel and chew it. Roll it over again and again, till you have got the very bitterness out of it. O may God make your sins as bitter as the judgment upon your sins! May the blessed

Spirit lead you to the cross of Christ, for you never will yield to the cross of Christ unless the Holy Spirit compels you. O that you may "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way"—the worst place to perish—to perish in the way and from the way, "when His wrath is kindled but a little."

Now, I will read the text again, and if any of you feel that its ready obedience is not found in you, that its joyful conformity to God does not in any way describe you, you need not listen to the rest of the sermon, but just cover your faces, and may God help you to pray, and then, I trust, before the sermon is done, you will get an answer to your prayer. "When You said, Seek you my face; my heart said to You, Your face, Lord, will I seek." Lord, if I cannot say that, break my heart now with Your great hammer, and help me to yield myself up to Your will, that I may be Yours now and Yours eternally.

II. Now, leaving that—not forgetting it in our hearts though, for I trust we shall continue praying God to bless that short word to the unconverted—I now come to talk to the believer about THE CULTIVATION OF A CONSTANT SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE TO THE LORD'S WILL.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, will you please notice in the text two or three points which I want you to attend to, and will you labor, by the help of God's Spirit, to get your spirits up to them? The first point is, *notice the universality of this spirit of obedience in the text.* David says, *"When You said, Seek you My face."* He does not mention any time. Notice, *"When You said."* If it were early in the morning, his heart said, "Your face, Lord, will I seek; I want You, for I have the day before me." If it were at midday, and the Spirit of God said, "Seek you My face," David's heart said, "O Lord, I will seek You; I want You now that the sun is scorching." If it were towards evening, and the voice said, "Seek you My face," David said, "Ah, Lord, the day is far spent; I may well seek Your face now." And if it were in the dead of night, when he awoke, his heart was still with God, and still ready to hear the divine word. "When *You* said, then *I* said; when *You* commanded, *I* obeyed; when *You* effectually called, I yielded cheerfully." Oh, what a mercy it would be if every believer's heart were in this state, so then we would not be sometimes obedient, and sometimes have our own way—sometimes respond to the divine voice, and at other times put our fingers in our ears; but to be in so sanctified a frame of mind that whenever the Master came to us, whether at cock-crowing, or at the evening watch, He would find us with our loins girt about, willing to go forth in His service. The text, you see, breathes the true spirit of service. It shows a mind that was constantly under divine influences, perpetually subject to the divine will. The magnetic needle always desires the pole: the Christian's heart should always desire communion with God. The rivers run into the sea—their waters continually flow into the mighty ocean; so let our souls, by the stress of their new nature, continually be seeking conformity to the divine will. Oh, it is easy to say it, but it is hard to do it, when it comes to the pinch! To say, "Your will be done," on the top of Tabor, is as easy as possible, but to say it in the gloom of Gethsemane, is so difficult that none but God Himself can enable us to say it. And yet it may be attained: entire resignation is

within reach—for all things are possible to him who believes. Let us seek it with the fullness of intense desire—

"Jesus, spotless Lamb of God,
You have bought me with Your blood,
I would value nothing beside
Jesus—Jesus crucified.
I am Yours, and Yours alone,
This I gladly, fully acknowledge;
And, in all my works and ways,
Only now would seek Your praise."

Next to the universality, I would draw your attention *to the promptness of the spirit* of obedience expressed in the text. "When You said, then I said." He did not ask questions. He did not stop to say, "Lord, when shall I do it? How shall I do it? Where shall I do it?" No, but, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." Beware of a questioning spirit in plain matters of duty—to delay to fulfill a conviction is to abide in sin; the Lord's command is not to be quibbled at, but to be obeyed at once. We find not quibbling here, much less do we find any objection. There are no objections about himself, the work, or its difficulties, but at once, and on the spot, he acts as with the prompt movement of a soldier when commanded by his officer. The word is no sooner heard than the mind is swayed by it, when the mind is under the sweet influences of divine love. The gospel according to Mark is regarded by some students as being peculiarly the gospel of service. It is said that in the early church, the emblem for Mark was an ox, to signify service; and it is very singular, whether that is so or not, that the evangelist Mark uses the word *eutheos*, or "straightway," more frequently than any of the other evangelists when he is speaking of Christ. If you will notice, Mark always says, "straightway," or "immediately;" as, for instance, in the very first chapter, "And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him: and immediately the spirit drove Him into the wilderness…And when He had gone a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway He called them." This is the very mark of the true servant—when he knows his Lord's will, he gives himself to it at once. As the centurion said, "I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it," so should it be with us. There should be a prompt response at once to the divine will. Do you always find it so? Does not God have to speak to some of us many times, and put a bit in our mouth, and a very sharp and cutting one, too, and tug at the reins a long while? Yes, and take to the whip, too, before He can get us to be as we should be? "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle;" but seek, my Brethren—this is what I am driving at—seek to cultivate a spirit of prompt obedience to the Lord's will. Take the advice of Mary, which she gave to the guests at Cana's feast, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." Whatever is the word of God, follow it in the strength of God at once, and without delay. There is a little story told of an infant class being examined by its teacher. The text to be thought about was, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,"

and the teacher said to the little girls, "How is that, my dears? How do they do God's will in heaven?" One said, "They do God's will in heaven *always*, sir." "That is well, but what next?" "They all do it; they all do it *cheerfully*, sir." The next one said, "Please sir, they do it *directly,"* and the next, "They do it *without asking any questions."* Good answers, certainly, and that is how we should do the Lord's will—and so make a heaven of this poor earth. O that our lagging feet were winged with sanctified willingness, our obstinate necks made pliant with hallowed submission, our wavering hearts confirmed in constant holiness! This is one of the noblest works of the Spirit of holiness—may He make our nature the seat of so transcendent a miracle, so glorious a change!

Observe that next to universality and promptness, we are bound to note the *personality* of David's reply. "You said, Seek *you* My face;" that was the command to all Your people, but, "Your face, Lord will *I* seek," was the personal reply of the waiting servant of God. Egotism is, no doubt, a very bad thing when it means self-conceit, self-seeking, self-confidence, self-laudation; but egoism in the sense of realizing one's own individual responsibility is a most desirable virtue. We need two words—egotism to signify that vice which admires and loves itself, and is thoroughly detestable; and then egoism, which determines that self shall be obedient, and pure, and firm, whatever others may be: this to be cultivated daily. Look at good old Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Oh, it is a grand thing to see a man forcing his way up the stream, struggling with manful vigor against the general current, swimming as live fish will do, against the stream, not floating down it as the dead fish do, but saying, "Let the world take its way; I take mine." "I, Athanasius, against the world," said that brave old confessor; and so must we say sometimes, *"I, I* will seek Your face, Lord—let others do as they will." Let us not be so attentive to other people's vineyards that our own vineyard is not kept. Whatever else we neglect let our own personal godliness be the object of our constant care. Let our heart be sound in the statutes of Jehovah, let us see that our own garments are kept unspotted from the world, and that in our pilgrim life we keep to the very center of the road. True religion must begin at home. Unless we ourselves are in good condition, our Christian efforts cannot be healthily conducted. Depend upon it, the worm at the root of our usefulness is bred amidst the decay of our personal piety. When you and I lose power in the family, power in the church, power in the world, it is because we have lost power with God in private. The Lord give us the habit and spirit of close, consistent, careful, conscientious personal obedience.

Then, too, *the heartiness of David's obedience demands our attention. "My heart* said," not my lips only, but my very heart said it; my soul was stirred to its depths, and moved to its center by the voice of God. Men who have great hearts are the men for power; they are full of force, because their inmost nature is on fire. There have been some men in this world who have had little else to recommend them except that by which they have attracted their fellow men to yield them homage—like Napoleon Bonaparte, for instance, when he said to his soldiers at Austerlitz, "Soldiers, this battle must be a thunderclap; we must hear no more of the

foe." And the men, filled with eagerness by his passionate energy, did his bidding, and made it such a thunderclap that all Europe shook beneath the march of those men-at-arms. He had the power, somehow or other, of making men yield to him as if they were all machines, impelled by the force of his personal will. They were not dragged into battle, but rushed with enthusiasm to the fight, longing to win glory or death. Now the voice of God should be to the Christian a voice that speaks to all his soul, wakes up his dormant faculties, and stirs the enthusiasm of his noblest nature, so that his heart says, "I will indeed seek Your face." As the British sailor, when Nelson said to him, "Ready?" replied, "Ready, yes, ready," and fired red-hot shot at the foe, so should our hearts respond to God's, "Seek you My face." "Lord, blessed be Your name for telling me to do that, for You and I are of one mind here; You love me to seek Your face, and I love to seek You; my heart responds—not my lips, not my body, dragged slavishly into the form of obedience—but my heart says, 'Your face, Lord, will I seek.'" Dear friends, get, hold, and live out a hearty religion! Depend upon it, that the religion which has not your heart in it, is best left alone. I scarcely can recommend you to go through religious performances if you look upon them as a dull routine. Do let your souls be in the ways of God. If ever you have a happy feast, let it be on Sunday; if ever there is a delightful walk, let it lead up to God's house; if ever there is a sweet song, let it be one of the songs of Zion; if ever there is a choice, retired, happy moment, let it be the moment which you spend in your closet in communion with God! O for more heart-work in our devotions!

Once more, cultivate the spirit of *resolution* in this matter. "Lord, Your face *will* I seek;" not "I hope I shall; I trust I may; I desire to; I sometimes think that one day I shall." No, but, "My heart said, Your face, Lord, will I seek." Men do not grow much better in this world by hoping that they will. If a man does not get so far as resolution, he may reckon that he has not started upon his journey. The Christian resolves in his soul—

"Though floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes."

And if he cannot always carry out his resolution as he would, yet oftentimes his Master accepts the will for the deed. To use John Bunyan's homely metaphor, "You send your servant for a doctor, and put him on the horse: the horse is but a sorry jade, and cannot go fast; but if the man tugs at the bridle, and uses the spur, and kicks and strains as if he would go if he could, you set the pace down as what the man would have it to be. You do not blame him for not going faster, because you clearly perceive that he would go fast if he could. So the Lord often looks upon His servants, and regards them." But what shall I say to those who would not go if they could, who do not say, "Your face, Lord, will I seek," but who hope, and who trust, and so on? That means that they will give God the go-by with mere hopes and fears, and trusts, instead of the strong resolution—"Your face, Lord, will I seek"; in the teeth of all my natural sluggishness, in the face of all my business cares, I am resolved and set on this, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." Cultivate, then, a spirit of

universal response to the divine word—prompt, personal, hearty, and resolved.

Before I leave this point—and then I will not detain you long with the rest—I cannot help thinking on an image which keeps coming to my mind while I am speaking. In the usual route which everybody takes in going through Switzerland, there is a long tract of country where there are innumerable beggars and people trying in various ways to get money from the traveler; and one way which generally succeeds, is that of blowing an enormous horn just opposite certain rocks. As soon as this horn is blown, the rocks resound on either side, repeat the note exactly, and then again, and again, and again; sometimes, perhaps, 12 or 20 times the echoes take up the notes and prolong them, producing some of the sweetest effects that ever charmed the human ear—"Linked sweetnesses long drawn out." You want the boy to blow again, and as he blows another blast, and gives intonations and notes to it, the rocks begin to sing again. Those rocks reminded me, as I stood and listened to their sweet notes, of God's people. Ah, I thought, you could not sing if it were not for the horn; you could not make any of these sweet notes if it were not for the living breath that is here; but you are so placed by God in His arrangements, that as soon as the sound is made by the living mouth, it is taken up and repeated, sweet, and sweet, and sweeter still each time. Thus should all the people of God be, so that when the Lord speaks, all the Lord's people should take up the echo, and repeat it again and again by practical obedience to the divine Command. As the echo to the voice, so should your heart and mine be to the voice of God.

III. But, now, thirdly. We have spoken of the absence of this spirit, and the cultivation of this spirit, and now a word or two upon THE SPECIAL OUTLET FOR THIS SPIRIT SUGGESTED IN THE TEXT.

The outlet suggested is seeking God's face, which I shall interpret to mean meditation, and especially the private and public worship of God. Now, you who love the Lord, you are all day long hearing God say, "Seek you My face." when the morning light awakens you, it is God saying, "Up, My child; the natural light streams from the sun: come and seek the spiritual light; seek My face." If you wake to abundant mercies, why, all the provisions on the table ought to say to you, "I am God's gift to you; seek the face of the giver." Go to Him with a note of praise; be not ungrateful, and suppose that you are in need, and have to say, "What shall I eat, and what shall I drink," while all your needs say to you, "Seek the Lord's face; He has provision, go to Him." Your abundance or your need may equally be a signpost to point you on the road to God. Suppose your child comes and asks you for something—it is God teaching you to do the same—to go like a child to your heavenly Father! If you are full of joy, should not your joy be like the chariots of Amminadib, to bear you to Jesus' feet? And if you are full of grief, should not your sorrow be as a swift ship that is blown by the winds? Should you not get nearer to God thereby? During the day, perhaps you hear of the fall of some professor. What does that say to you? "Seek God's face that you may be held up." Perhaps you hear a sinner swear: what does that say to you, but, "Pray for that sinner"? All the sins we see other men commit, ought to be so many

jogs to our memory to pray for the coming of Christ, and for the salvation of souls. In this way you may go through the world, and the very stones in the street will say to you, "Seek you the Lord's face." If you meet a funeral, what does that say? "You will soon be dying; seek the Lord's face now." And when Sunday comes, what a call is that—"Seek you My face!" Brothers and sisters, I wish that we responded to each one of these invitations of our heavenly Father. His likeness is stamped in some of its features on all His works. By the visible things of God the invisible things are to be discovered. Go forth, like Isaac, and meditate at eventide, and you will find the heavens declaring His glory, and the firmament showing forth His handiwork. The lilies of the field will tell you of One who has hidden His wisdom in the raiment which decks them more brilliantly than Solomon in all his glory. As the Master Himself often retired for meditation and prayer to the mountainside and the garden's shade, that alone with his Father He might seek the face of His God, so let us leave awhile the busy scenes of life and the haunts of men, to spend a still hour in quiet meditation over the works of God's hands, and in pouring out our hearts into His ever-loving breast. How much we lose by not noticing God in Nature, and the Presence of our Father behind and before us! I wish we were more in prayer. I long for it for myself—I desire it for you also. I wish we were more in praise too. Well would it be for us if the blessings of God, poured out upon us so lavishly, excited in us true gratitude at all times. Happy would that man be who responded to each touch of God's beneficent hand like a well-made instrument answers to the fingers of the player. If our whole life were thus vocal with praise, the music of our grateful souls would come up with acceptance before God, and we would find in our joyful spirits a continual feast; this joy of the Lord would be our strength—we would have meat to eat which the world knows not of. O that our days were more filled up with what will be our heavenly occupation, namely, adoring love, grateful wonder, thankful praise! As God is so continually saying to us, "Seek you My face," let our spirit find vent for itself in this, "Your face, Lord, will I seek."

IV. And, now, the last thing is, WHAT WILL BE THE REWARD OF SUCH A SPIRIT?

Have you a marginal Bible with you? If so, kindly read the margin. It runs thus, "My heart said to You, Let my face seek Your face." Ah, there is a new meaning there, and a blessed meaning too. Let me read it again, "My heart said to you, Let my face seek Your face." I suppose that is the more literal, probably the more accurate rendering; and I gathered from that, the thought of the reward of those whose spirits yield to the will of God, that is to say, *they enjoy communion with God.* It is the long-lost blessedness of Eden restored to us, with greater sweetness added to it. In paradise God came and talked with Adam as a man talks with his friend. Our first parents had communion with God which they lost by sin, but it is now more than restored to us in divine grace. Heaven will be the place of perfect fellowship; but we may foretaste much of the bliss of the future world, and eat of the grapes of Eshcol, before we ever tread the green fields of the better land. Yes, it means lost blessings restored, and future ones realized, when we can set ourselves face to face with God, and hold

blessed communion with Him. Now, is this the life we are leading? Many Christians contrive to live without getting into the heart of Christianity at all. In the wilderness the children of Israel dwelt round the tabernacle, each tribe marching or resting in its appointed place. They were all under the protection of the cloud, and followed the guiding pillar, and enjoyed the divine blessing; but this was not enough—they might enter, and were bound to do so, the precincts of the tabernacle, and there witness the worship of God, and, bringing their sacrifice, they also took part in the homage paid to their God and King. Beyond the outer court of the people, was that of the priests, and there the favored few might go, and present the incense before God on the altar of gold, spread before him the show bread, and light the seven-branched lamp. These enjoyed nearer fellowship with God—they were emphatically called the "servants of the Lord." There was, however, an inner place, shut out from the eyes of priest and people alike, where once a year the high priest entered alone, with blood, and he of all men living, drew near to God who dwelt between the cherubim in the holy place. Now, we are a royal priesthood, and through the torn veil we have boldness of access to the very mercy seat in the holiest of holies, and we ought to realize and enjoy daily our high privilege! Far be it from us to remain in the camp outside the tabernacle. It is true we may be safe there, and enjoy many mercies, but it is not living up to our blessings. Go into the court and present your offering of prayer and praise; go as a priest and enter the inner place, and stay till you have trod the secret place of the Most High, and face to face with God upon the mercy Seat, had real dealings with Him Himself. This is your right, and to neglect it is to despise one of the choicest blessings conferred by God on fallen, but now in Christ redeemed ones. Let your hearts forever cry—

"Lord, let me see Your beauteous face!
It yields a heaven below;
And angels round the throne will say,
'Tis all the heaven they know.
A glimpse—a single glimpse of You,
Would more delight my soul
Than this vain world, with all its joys,
Could I possess the whole."

But we find in the text another thought of blessedness. On our face is reflected the likeness of God, so that men see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven. We by communion with God may become manifestly like He, partakers of the divine nature. As men, we were made in God's likeness—we fell and lost it; but by divine grace we are restored. How shall I illustrate this? Why, there is Moses. Moses on the Mount for 40 days sees God, and when he comes down, the result, as shown in his face, is that his face shines. How could it be otherwise? God had been shining right into his face, and he could not but reflect that delightful glory. That is the meaning, I suppose, of the passage, "Being changed from glory to glory, as by the image of the Lord." It is our looking upon God, producing sanctification—the light of God shining into our faces till our faces also shine with the reflected glory. "Let my face seek Your face."

Ah, beloved, I could say some things I scarcely like to say about that text; for it looks not only as if the saints said to God, "Lord, look at me, and let me look at You; show me Your face, and You look at my face; Lord, let us spend our time and our eternity in lovingly looking at each other." But I wish the saint to understand that there is another way in which our face seeks Christ's face. It is thus expressed by the spouse, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine"—when the soul of the saint and the heart of the well-beloved fall into such visible union with each other that the conjugal kiss is given, and they come into the fullest, nearest, ripest, richest, and most celestial fellowship that can be known this side heaven—

"Like some bright dream that comes unsought,
When slumbers over me roll,
Your image ever fills my thought,
And charms my ravished soul."

And again, as Dr. Watts has well put it—

"The smiles of Your face,
How amiable they are!
'Tis heaven to rest in Your embrace,
And nowhere else but there.
You are the sea of love,
Where all my pleasures roll;
The circle where my passions move,
And center of my soul."

May you and I often have in our hearts that panting, that longing, that sighing, that crying after fullness of fellowship with Jesus, our hearts always saying, "Lord, let my face seek Your face; let my face never be satisfied till it sees Your face; let my love never be satisfied till it is lost in the ocean of Your love; let me never be content till I am wholly lost in the all-absorbing love of divine Immanuel." O so may it be! Then so shall it be, if your heart now says, in answer to God's voice, "Your face, Lord, will I seek."

I hope you have not forgotten the first point, however, and what I said about the unconverted. Let them take their portion. God grant that by getting their portion tonight, they may not get their portion in the flames of hell. Then you believers get your portion, also. Remember, the Lord's portion is His people; and, on the other hand, "The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore will I trust in Him." The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 27.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

A PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT
NO. 768

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT SURREY CHAPEL, BLACKFRIARS ROAD.

"Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance:
feed them also, and lift them up forever."
Psalm 28:9.

LET me direct your attention to the verse before the text, and then let us read the text in connection with it, "The Lord is their strength, and He is the saving strength of His anointed. Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up forever." You have in the eighth verse, *the church militant reviewed;* and in the ninth verse, *the church militant prayed for.*

With regard to the Psalmist's review of the militant church, it is summed up in two sentences: "Jehovah is their strength;" "Jehovah is the saving strength of His anointed." The people of God are strong, then; for their strength is spoken of. They are weak in themselves, yes, they confess themselves to be weakness itself, yet by faith, when they grasp the power of the Almighty, they are no longer feeble, but they venture to say with the apostle, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." The power of the army of the Lord does not lie in connection with any one of His soldiers, in the man himself—the Lord is their strength. They may differ in many respects, but this is true of every single warrior in the host of the Lord, that the Lord is his strength. He has no strength in the flesh, he cannot find anything there which can assist him; all his springs are in his God, and he draws all his supplies for power in spiritual conflicts from God and from God alone. If you were to review the Prussian army, you might very properly say that the needle-gun is their strength—and years ago we used to feel quite sure that the Armstrong gun was our strength; but if you examine the ranks of the Lord's people, you will perceive that they rest in no chariots, nor horses, nor weapons of war, whether carnal or spiritual, but the Lord Jehovah is the strength of the whole company. Can you not picture David reviewing his troops, looking along the ranks of the king's mighties, who had been with him in the cave of Adullam, and had done good service in his attacks upon the Philistines, and in various skirmishes and battles in their youth, and their riper years? Can you not hear him say, "The Lord is their strength"? Can you not hear him, as he relates the heroics of his heroes, declaring that in every case they were made mighty by the God of Jacob? David adds that the Lord is his own strength, too. The confidence of the soldiers was also the confidence of the captain. "He is the saving strength of His anointed." The margin has it, "He is the strength of salvation to His anointed," for David had many salvation's, many remarkable escapes and deliverances; and these he does not attribute to his own agility, foresight, wit, or wisdom, much less to the valor of his brave right hand, but he

confesses that the Lord who was the strength of the soldiers, was also the Savior of their anointed monarch.

Put in David's place tonight, before the eyes of your faith, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and He will say the same. He, in His day of feeble flesh, fought and overcame by the power of the Spirit, with which He was anointed. He fought the battle for us in the strength of the Most High; and now, looking all along the ranks of those whom He leads to battle and to ultimate victory, He testifies tonight, "The Lord is their strength. He is the strength of salvation to His anointed."

I do not intend, however, to dwell upon that verse, but shall take you at once to the text, which is *a prayer for the church militant,* a prayer divided into four parts. We ought to pray constantly for the people of God, they always need it; it is always our duty to remember their necessities. It is always our privilege to pray for one another, prayer is always useful to the church, and therefore we should delight to exercise it. The fire upon the altar of intercession should never go out, neither by night nor by day. Our prayer for the Lord's people should be comprehensive. The church of God needs many things, and we must not be content to ask for one thing when the church needs many. We must be thoughtful about our prayers, so that, like David, we may say much in little. Some people's prayers have very little in them; they much abound with the chaff of utterance, but have but one grain of the wheat of meaning. We must not rush into God's presence and there offer any words that may come to mind, but we should direct our prayer to God, and meditate upon it, so that when we utter it, there may be something in it, some meaning; not asking for a shadowy something, but pleading wisely for what we intelligently desire. I make that remark because this prayer of David's is peculiarly rich, eminently suggestive, and full of meaning: "Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up forever."

Here are *four choice blessings; let us take them one by one.*

I. The first is, "SAVE YOUR PEOPLE."

In how many ways may this be desired for the elect of God? It may be offered, first, *in reference to their conversion* from their natural estate of sin, darkness, and death. Brothers and sisters, we who are saved should never cease praying, "Lord, save the chosen who as yet are uncalled! Save those who are redeemed by blood, but who are not yet redeemed by Your power; save Your people!" If you do not pray for sinners, I am afraid you are a sinner yourself, and know nothing about prayer. The old proverb is, "He who would go to heaven alone, shall never go there at all;" and he who never has any melting of his heart towards the lost sheep who as yet are not gathered into the fold, is most probably a wolf himself. I am sure that one of the first instincts of the new nature is to begin to agonize for others. We may make our prayers as wide as we will, but still we must at times make them discriminating and peculiar; and while we say, "Let Your saving health be known among all nations," it becomes us also to recollect the doctrine of discriminating grace, and to say, "Save Your people, O Lord! You have ordained them to eternal life; fulfill Your purpose! O Lord Jesus, You have paid the price for them; rescue out of the jaw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear, Your own precious sheep!" We may plead here with mighty arguments. We may besiege the throne

with irresistible weapons when we come with such a plea as this—"Lord, save Your people—some of them know nothing about You; some of them know more than they have ever practiced; some of them are soaked in the crimson dye of sin; some of them have grown gray in vice; some of them, despite warnings, have hardened their necks, and seem as if they would be suddenly destroyed without remedy; but, O Lord, we come in as intercessors for them; in the name of Jesus, we plead for them as He pleads for them: Lord, save Your people! By some means, by any means, by our means if it may please You to honor us with such an honor, save Your people, those whom You love, but who as yet do not love You!" It is well often to pray—

"If some poor wandering child of Yours
Has spurned today the voice divine,
Now, Lord, the gracious work begin;
Let him no more lie down in sin."

But the words may be applied, also, to *the carrying on of the work of sanctification in those who, in a certain sense, are saved.* All who have believed in Christ are saved from the guilt of sin, but they are not all as yet completely delivered from the power of sin; No, we believe that none of them are, so that we may daily pray, "Lord, go on with the work of saving Your people; If You have brought them up out of Egypt, Lord, lead them through the wilderness till they enter into the Canaan of perfect holiness and rest. Some of Your people have very weak faith, save them from their unbelief, for it is a great sin, and at the same time a great sorrow to them; some of Your children have hot and angry tempers, Lord, save Your people from being passionate; many of Your children are desponding, they give way to it, Lord, save them from unbelief; others of them are proud and high-minded, Lord, save them from that folly; numbers of them grow inactive, Lord, save them from lethargy; and others are slothful, Lord, save Your people from idleness." It should be our objective ourselves to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," and after that, we should seek our brothers and sisters good by the use of edification, and by the use of this prayer, "Lord, carry on the work of the saving of Your people."

The text may also be very very much used in our prayers in reference *to backsliders.* I am afraid we often forget that very numerous class of people, backsliders; but when we think of them, we should evermore cry, "Lord, save Your people." Some of them have been such dreadful hypocrites, and have brought such dishonor on the cross of Christ, that we can hardly pray for them as the Lord's people, let us then plead for them as sinners. On the other hand, there are some even among the worst backsliders who have the vital spark in them. They are the people of God; they are God's sheep, even though they have sadly gone astray, and for these our prayers must be constant, incessant, fervent, believing. "O Lord, save Your people." I exhort you who are walking in the light of God's countenance to pray for your poor brothers and sisters who have been allowed to fall into sin. They are often despised by those who are at ease, but if you despise them, remember you may at some time fall into the same case yourself. "Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." Meanwhile, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of

weakness. Let the prayer go up for that very, very numerous band of sadly broken hearts who, like David, have gone astray and brought shame upon themselves. Let us say, "Lord, save Your people; let them be as brands plucked out of the burning, and though we hate the garment spotted with the flesh, yet, Lord, save Your people."

And do you not think that the prayer should be frequently put up by us in private for *those of God's people who are much tempted?* There are some who go on the road to heaven with finer weather than others, but there are not a few who always seem to have temptations dogging their heels. They are, perhaps, themselves, like Mr. Fearing, of whom John Bunyan writes that he did escape from the Slough of Despond, "but, somehow, he seemed to carry the Slough about with him." He had got the Slough in his own heart. There are some such still. They not only sometimes get doubts and fears, but their constitutional temperament is such that it keeps on doubting. Or there may be some other besetting sin, and you may be constantly tempted by it. Let us pray for such. And, again, some of God's people are placed in positions in life where they are more tempted than others are. You good people, you children of godly parents, you husbands and wives who live in happy family circles, perhaps scarcely know the miseries of some who are placed where ungodly people can dominate over them. It is a sad thing when the rod of the wicked rests upon the lot of the righteous, and the temptation is lest the righteous should put forth his hand unto iniquity. Let us pray for such. They are plants of God's own right-hand planting, but they seem to be planted in a bleak soil—not house plants, as some of you are, who can go often to the house of God and hear the gospel, but, perhaps, they are living in some country town where there is no gospel ministry, or where there is a mere make-shift pulpit with somebody in it who knows nothing about the gospel. Now, these people are just like plants that are pinched by the frost. Pray for them, that the great Farmer may shelter and protect them. Pray for these shorn lambs, that the good Shepherd may temper the wind to them, and let this be the prayer in every case, "Save Your people."

And, beloved, *this prayer may also be applied to the whole church.* The church of God at this day is said to be in great danger from a form of Popery. Certainly a form of Popery is very rampant just now in this land, and has a great deal of force about it, so that it is not to be laughed down, but is to be met with sterner weapons than mere arrows of raillery. But we can cry for the church, "Lord, save Your people; and whether it is philosophical speculation or superstitious error which may put Your church, as some men may think, in danger, do You be pleased to keep the gates of Zion, so that the gates of Hell may not prevail against her; save Your people!" Let us not tremble for the ark of the Lord, as if strange things were happening to us, and the church should be overcome by these delusions. Many false professors will fall, but the elect are safe. "Christ's sheep will hear His voice and follow Him; a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." We believe that if for a while they turn aside to cunningly devised fables, they will soon discover that it is not the pasture they desire, and He who restores our souls will bring back His wandering ones. We are not afraid for the

church, but still it becomes us to fence her around, to ward off the foe, and to protect God's chosen; therefore we must use all means, and none are better than this petition to the Great Shepherd to preserve His flock. I trust that as long as we live this will be one of our morning and evening prayers, "O Lord, save Your people!"

Before I leave this point, however, let me observe that *if we pray this prayer, we must take care that we also carry it out in practice.* To pray to God for that which I am not willing to promote by my own personal activity is to mock God. If, then, I say, "Lord, save Your people," what ought I to do? Why, to put myself constantly on the alert to be the instrument of saving God's people. For instance, if I meet with sinners, I should try to talk with them about Christ; if I meet with the ignorant, I should try to instruct them in the way of salvation: I should, whenever I go to the house of God, try, if possible, to get a word with somebody. How can I say, "Save Your people," and yet not try to do something to save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins? If I mean what I say, I shall help the sanctification of my brothers and sisters who are believers; I shall try to reclaim the backslider; I shall endeavor to strengthen tempted men, and I shall, as far as possible, bear my witness against the errors of the times, or else how can I go to God and say, "Save Your people," when I have not myself in any way contributed to that desirable result? And how can some of you pray this prayer, who have never cared for sinners? How can you say, "Save Your people," when you only go up to a place of worship to get fed yourselves, and have no thought, and no care about the dying sons of men; when you neither give to God's cause, nor speak for Christ's name? How can you dare to pray a prayer which must freeze upon your lips, or rise up in judgment against you to condemn you for your hypocrisy? O dear friends, let us take care that our prayers do not become swift witnesses against us to condemn us! Our bad example has a tendency to destroy others—can you and I pray, "Lord, save Your people," when we are doing our best to lead them astray? Our mere silence has a tendency to make men think that the truth of God is not precious, and how can we pray, "Save Your people," when, through our own slothful ignorance, we help to lull men's consciences into a slumber which could end in their everlasting destruction? Lord, burn this prayer into our souls as with a hot iron, but at the same time help us to feel its practical force in all the actions of our life: "'Lord, save Your people;' help us to save them through Your Spirit."

II. And now we come to the second prayer, "BLESS YOUR INHERITANCE."

After men are saved, they have still many needs. We should not be satisfied with being saved. Some people are. They are thankful for it, and they are satisfied with it, but we should not be so. There is a wreck yonder. The ship is going to pieces. Some brave men enter a lifeboat: they tug over those mountainous billows; they return in safety from the ship: they bring a half-drowned mariner on shore. He is saved! He is saved! Let us be thankful, but is that enough? Certainly not! Kind hands are preparing dry garments. Food is being procured. A cordial is ready for the man to drink; and if he has lost his all, a subscription is made for him that he may start anew in his business, and begin life again. That the

man should be sent back to his friends, and to his country saved is a blessing, an unspeakable blessing. If only on broken boards and broken pieces of the ship we all get to land, it will be a great mercy; but when Paul and his crew got to shore in that way, it was not thought to be enough; they began to light a fire, and Paul gathered sticks. And so, saved men need comforts after they are rescued; and, consequently, the prayer of the text is not superfluous—"Bless Your inheritance."

Now, what does this prayer mean? It means a great deal more than I can tell you tonight. I should need to preach 20 sermons on such a text as this, but I will just mention two or three points upon which, I hope, we pray that God would bless His heritage.

The first thing is, *that He would bless His church with greater unity.* The church of God is too much divided. I thank God there is a real and hearty love among the Lord's people in many places, and in this district I am sure there is no lack of it. Our being in this very Surrey Chapel tonight is a direct answer to the malicious lies of those who say that there is no love among God's people. *We do* love each other, and we seek each other's good. But it is not so everywhere. There are some places where Ephraim envies Judah, and where Judah vexes Ephraim. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there are some who are a great deal fonder of the tribe than they are of the nation, and much more earnest for the prosperity of a regiment than for the victory of the army. It must not be so among us; we must pray, "Bless Your inheritance! Unite their hearts, O God; give them to know 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism;' take away everything which divides them, every error which splits them into sections; bring them to be one in truth, one in Christ, one in love to each other."

With this we ought to pray that *they may be more earnest.* Truly, this is the prayer that is needed, "Bless Your inheritance; bless them with a drop or two of the Savior's Love in their hearts; bless some of them with a little heavenly fire." This is the great need of the times. The church of God is well organized. Perhaps never in the history of the world has the church of God been so potent in its organizations and possessions as it is now; but it lacks the first fire, the pristine zeal and energy which the apostles and their immediate successors had. We need to have again the spirit of revival, not merely as we have it now, I trust, in a measure, but with seven-fold energy. O that the Lord would bless His people in this way, knitting them together in one, and then sending the holy fire down upon the entire church. The church stands too often like a train made up at the station, waiting for the steam to rise. We need the fire which shall create the impetus to carry us forward in our onward career. It is not enough to have right forms and orthodox creed; we need the holy zeal to make all these things overflowing with life and power. Now, we can never work ourselves up into this state, we may pray ourselves into it, however. I do not believe in getting up a revival by the methods which some adopt. If we are to have a true quickening it will be by the Holy Spirit given to us in answer to fervent prayer. Therefore, I say pray to God, "Bless Your inheritance," and He will give us the sacred zeal which is now so much needed. God grant us it for His Son's sake.

I believe that many of God's people also need blessing in another respect, and that is, *with more happiness.* It really is lamentable to see how, in certain quarters, misery is common among the people of God. They are a feeble folk in some places. Mr. Ready-to-Halt, whom John Bunyan speaks of, must have been the father of a very large family. I should say that the manufacture of crutches will never die out altogether; and really, in some places, it must be a most lucrative business, for many of the Lord's people never get beyond, "I hope so," or, "I trust so," and no hymn in the hymn book is so sweet to them as—

"'Tis a point I long to know."

I did not put that hymn in "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK." I had a debate with myself about it. I thought to myself, "Ah, well, they will know all about that without my putting it into the hymn book," and I thought that if any of you wanted to sing it, you could sing it alone at home, but it did not seem to me to be a hymn that a whole congregation should use. It is a blessed hymn: I have to sing it myself sometimes, I am sorry to say. It is an excellent hymn, as expressing the feelings of some of God's people, but it will not do for a whole congregation to get into that state. It is very well for the good wife to have a little black draught at hand when the child needs it sometimes, but to give the whole family the same might be a great deal more injurious than beneficial. And so it is with regard to that class of hymns. It is suitable to a certain case of diseased spiritual condition, but it would be wrong to suppose or to insinuate that all the people of God at any one time, in one congregation, could be found in exactly the same condition of sad decrepitude of faith. Brothers and sisters, we must pray for the entire church of God that it may be happier. May we have more faith in the promises, more reliance upon the "immutable things where it is impossible for God to lie;" more confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit; more dependence in the abounding presence of Jesus Christ to be the comfort and the help of His people, so that, setting up her banners, the church may not creep along under mists and clouds, but be "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Lord, bless Your people; bless them with unity; bless them with earnestness; bless them with happiness; bless them with confidence! And, indeed, there might be made a list so long that you might never cease prayer; and when you had completed it, you might begin again, and your supplications would be an endless chain of blessings. "Bless Your inheritance."

Would it not be well, dear brothers and sisters, for us to *select some out of God's inheritance* when we are praying the prayer? In order to make this distinction, and pray especially for them, it is not a bad habit of mentioning some persons in prayer before God in private by name; only do not do that in the way in which a man I used to know did it. Whenever he was offended with anybody, he used to threaten them that he would pray for them, and really such prayer as that, which was offered out of a sort of gracious malice, is to be avoided. But do it without saying anything to anybody about it, and not making a boast of it. Put down some of God's people who need certain blessings. For instance, there are certain ministers who need to be helped; say, "Lord, bless Your inheritance." There are certain workers in the Sunday school and elsewhere;

certain Christians you know to be weak; certain others you perceive to be in peril. Put up prayers for such; that special blessings may come to them. Remember how our Lord said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." We know that He prayed for all of His elect, because we have His prayer in the gospel of John; but here He prayed for Peter by name, apart from the others, because Peter needed it. So must we particularize at times our prayer for the church, and plead for some by name. I am sure that Christians can never err if they pray for their own pastors, and plead with God on behalf of those who watch over them as those who must give an account of the souls of all their hearers. The apostle says, "Brethren, pray for us;" and all God's servants ever since have felt the need of the church's prayers. Pray for me, my hearers; and you who worship here, pray for your esteemed pastor; and all of you pray much for those who minister to you in holy things.

And before I leave this point, let me add, *take care that you practically prove the genuineness of your prayer.* "Bless Your inheritance." Take care that *you* bless them. So far as is in your power, seek to confer blessings upon all your fellow Christians. There are some of you who are always grumbling at the church of God. You pretend to say, "Lord, bless Your church," and yet you curse it. Why should you go and spread abroad the faults and follies of your own brothers and sisters? Remember what Noah's sons did with their father? Imitate them, and not bring upon yourselves the curse of Ham. True, there is much that is mischievous in the church of God, and, among other mischiefs, there is the habit of always finding fault with Christian people. Pray, "Bless Your inheritance." Bless that inheritance yourselves; and if it is in your power, by conveying to others any spiritual or temporal gift, to confer a blessing upon any of the purchase of the Savior's blood, be not slack to do so, lest your prayer should be a witness against your unfaithfulness to and your forgetfulness of the Lord's people. "Bless Your inheritance."

III. The third prayer is, "FEED THEM ALSO."

God's people need, after they have eternal life, to have that life sustained. They must have food, or they will become faint with hunger; food, or they will become weak from lack of nourishment; food, or they would actually die for want of the staff of life.

In order that God's people may be fed, I believe that it is His usual appointment to provide them ministers. When you pray, therefore, "Feed them also," do not forget to ask for those disciples to whom Christ gives His bread, that they may break it to the multitude. When you are praying for the sheep, ask God to send those under-shepherds, whose business it is to lead the flock, into the green pastures in their Master's name. Do not forget to pray for students to be raised up and guided into the ministry. I remind the church of this, for ought we not to pray that the Lord would send forth laborers into His harvest? Is not this a prayer that is constantly forgotten? When Jesus Christ ascended up on high, we are told He received gifts for men, and those gifts were apostles, evangelists, and pastors. I am afraid we do not plead for these ascension gifts. We do not use the office of an ascended Savior as we should, but let us try to do it from now on, and never forget to say, "Lord, send pastors after Your

own heart, who shall feed Your people with knowledge and with understanding."

This prayer includes not only the agent by which they are to be fed, but *the very food with which they are to be fed.* Pray, therefore, that the Lord would give His people a clear insight into the truth of God, that they may not be mistaken, and so feed upon pernicious herbs, instead of the sweet and tender grass by the still waters. Ask the Lord to illuminate His people's minds as to the doctrines of covenant grace that they may see into the ancient things, so that they may get to the depth that lies under and that rolls beneath, and may reach to the precious things of the everlasting hills. Why, half of the Lord's people do not feed because they do not believe that that is bread which God puts on the table. They are afraid of some of His truths, because they have been told, "Oh, they are so high; it is such high doctrine." "Savory meat," I say, "such as my soul loves!" O that these people had but an appetite to feed upon these things from which they are kept back, not because the things are not good, but because they have been warned against them, though, whatever is in this Book is fit for our souls to live upon. If God has revealed the truth, O believer, be not ashamed to accept it, and to make it the nutriment of your soul.

Still, even if we had the prayer answered as to good pastors and sound doctrines that is not all we need—the soul's food is to really feed upon Christ Himself. Jesus Christ is received by the heart through *communion with Him;* and it is only by fellowship with Jesus that, after all, we get the marrow and the fatness of the gospel; for "the truth as it is in Jesus" is the only truth of God which really nourishes the spiritual man. Talking this day with a brother in the ministry, one who has been many years a preacher, he was telling me that he had been to the British Museum library, looking for sermons upon Christ, and in turning the books over, he said, he thought he had found pretty well 500 upon any other subject to one upon the Lord Jesus! Perhaps he was wrong in his estimate; but even supposing he had found but five upon other subjects to one upon the Lord Jesus, would not that account for the fact of the lamentations that are made about the leanness of the pulpit? Leave Christ out? O my beloved, better leave the pulpit out altogether. If a man can preach one sermon without mentioning Christ's name in it, it ought to be his last, certainly the last that any Christian ought to go to hear him preach. If I saw a notice in the Blackfriars Road that there was a baker there who made a loaf of bread without any flour in it, I would deal with him. He might say, "Well, I only did it that once." Never mind, sir; if you did it once, that is enough; if you could do it once, you have a fatal faculty that renders it impossible for me to confide in you. And if you can get through a sermon without Christ, my dear friend, you may get whom you like, I shall not help you at your place, at any rate. No, we must have the Lord Jesus Christ preached; and even the proclamation of Christ is not enough unless the Holy Spirit brings Christ home to the soul, opens up the spiritual faculty to receive Him, gives us a heavenly appetite, and then enables us to assimilate Christ, to take Him into ourselves, into our inward parts, and make Him part and parcel of ourselves by a holy appropriating faith. Unless this comes we cannot be fed! Though it seems a

strange thing to say, yet I believe this prayer, "Feed Your people," has a literal meaning about it in spiritual things. God Himself must absolutely put the spiritual food into our mouths, or else all the pastors with the best doctrines and the best preaching of Christ will not accomplish the purpose. We are babes; we must receive our nourishment from our God, and from nowhere else; and if He is not pleased to convey it to our souls, we shall hear the word, and see the word, but feed upon the Word we never shall. Now, what a good prayer this will be for next Sunday morning when you go to your places of worship, "Lord, feed Your people," and as soon as ever the minister is seen, "Lord, feed Your people." As soon as ever he opens his mouth, and you begin to enjoy the word, do not stop short, but say, "Lord, make it real food to me, and to all my brothers and sisters; feed them, also, for You alone can do it."

I think I ought to say before I leave that last point, that if you pray, "Feed them also," you *must remember that you must practically carry it out,* just as Peter did, to whom the Lord said, "Feed My sheep; feed My lambs." If you know anything, tell it; if you have had any experience, declare it; if you have had any illumination, reveal it. Do not eat your honey alone, or it will turn sour; give it to others. If the Lord has given you but a crust, go and share it with some other hungry soul. If you would have God's people fed, feed them with what God has given you. "Oh," says one poor widow woman here, "how can I feed any of God's people? I know so little." Ah, you are like the woman of Zarephath who said, "As the Lord your God lives, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." Ah, but still that woman fed the greatest prophet that was in the land, and with that very handful of meal! So it may be with you. A simple word which you may speak to some of God's greatest servants may be a comfort to them for many a day. Do not despise in your soul the day of small things. Thank God for a little experience of His divine grace, and tell others of that little experience; for God can make your barrel of meal so that it shall not be exhausted, and your cruse of oil so to be multiplied as never to dry up.

IV. And now the last prayer is, "LIFT THEM UP FOREVER."

God's people need lifting up. They are very heavy by nature. They have no wings, or, if they have, they are like the dove that lies among the pots; and they need divine grace to make them mount on wings covered with feathers of silver, and of yellow gold. By nature sparks fly upward, but the sinful souls of men fall downward. "Lift them up forever." David himself said, "Unto You, O God, do I lift up my soul," and he here feels the necessity that other people's souls should be lifted up as well as his own.

There are three ways in which God's people need to be lifted up. *They need to be elevated in character.* "Lift them up; O Lord, do not allow Your people to be like the world's people; lift them up forever. The world lies in the wicked one, lift them out of it; the world's people are looking after silver and gold, seeking their own pleasures, and the gratification of their lusts; but, Lord, lift Your people up above all this; keep them from being 'muck-rakers,' as John Bunyan calls the man who was always looking after gold; keep them from having their eyes always downwards; spare

them from becoming carnal and sensual, lest they also become like others, devilish. O let Your grace lift Your people up, so that in whatever neighborhood they may be found, they may be lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." O my brothers and sisters, this is a prayer for which we might all go down on our knees 10 times a day for ourselves and for our fellow Christians, that God would elevate the general tone of true religion, that Christianity might become more powerful. I am not saying it is a fact, but I sometimes am afraid that the greatest mischief that there is in the world at the present time is an abundance of religious profession which is not genuine. You know very well how bad it is for trade when there is a great quantity of paper money about, and not enough sterling bullion to back it up with; there is sure to come a panic and a crash. I am afraid that the Christian church issues a great deal of paper religion, and has not enough bullion to back it up. After all, in God's sight, it is nothing but the solid gold that is worth having, and the paper profession will be burnt to ashes in the fire. May God "lift up" His church, and make her a truly golden church; that her piety may be a true bullion piety; that the circulation of the church may be a truly golden medium, and not a mere bill and paper piety. Elevate Your people in character, O God.

In the next place," Lift them up forever," that is, *prosper Your people in conflict.* In the battle, if they seem to fall, yet be pleased to give them the victory. If the foot of the foe is upon their necks for a moment, yet help them to grasp the sword of the Spirit, and eventually to win the triumph. Lord, encourage Your people. Do not let them sit in the dust, mourning forever—

"Why should the children of a king
Go mourning all their days?"

Allow not the adversary to vex them and make them afraid; but if they have been, like Hannah, persecuted, let them, like Hannah, sing to the mercy of a delivering God. "Lift them up forever."

And then, thirdly, *lift them up at the last.* Lift them up by taking them Home; lift them up forever by bidding them dwell in Your presence where there is fullness of joy; lift them out of that sick bed; lift them out of the tomb; lift them up from the worm, from the rottenness of the grave; lift them up at the last blast of the archangel's trumpet, not their souls alone, which You lift up as soon as they die, but their bodies also, which are the temples of the Holy Spirit; lift them up in both their natures, the spiritual and the material; lift them up forever and cause them, as complete men, made perfect in Christ Jesus, to forever rejoice in Him; lift every one of them up—

"From beds of dust and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day;
Feed them also, and lift them up forever."

O my brothers and sisters, that you and I may but get home at the last! How I love that desire of David's, in the 27th Psalm, where he says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord." That one desire sucked all the others up, and this is the one desire, I trust, which we have—

"Jerusalem! My happy home!

Name ever dear to me;
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and in thee?"

Oh, to see the king's face at home in His own land! To see Him here in this exile through the perspective glass of faith is rich delight; but when this cheek shall lie upon His bosom and these lips shall feel the kisses of His love, oh what ravishment, what infinite delight, what perfection of bliss to our complete manhood! Courage, my brothers and sisters! Set your faces against the steep; go up the hillside with Christ in the rough weather, for the top of the hill and the Palace Beautiful will make amends for it all, in that land where the windows are agates, and the gates carbuncles, and all the borders are of precious stones, where the saints shall be lifted up forever. Oh, it will be joy and bliss to be there indeed! Till then, we will put the prayer together, and say, "Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up forever."—

"Pray that Jerusalem may have
Peace and felicity:
Let them who love You and Your peace
Have still prosperity.
Therefore I wish that peace may still
Within your walls remain,
And ever may your palaces
Prosperity retain.
Now, for my friends' and brethren's sakes,
Peace be in you, I'll say;
And for the house of God our Lord,
I'll seek your good always."

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

SERVING THE LORD WITH GLADNESS
NO. 769

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Serve the Lord with gladness."
Psalm 100:2.

MUCH of the sweetness of music lies in the ear to which it is addressed. There are mysterious sweetnesses and unknown harmonies which lurk amid the notes, and are detected only by the ear attuned to melody. The most enchanting strain to one ear may be discord, itself, to another. The wise man tells us that as vinegar is upon niter, so is he who sings songs to a sad heart. The song in itself may embody the soul of delight, and yet it may be misery itself to the ear which is not in tune with it. So is it with my text. It is a short, but inexpressibly sweet stanza. "Serve the Lord with gladness," is a delightful sonnet to the *spiritual* mind; but to the ungodly, the careless, the unspiritual, it is flat and dull—the grinding of labor's wheel—and far other than a verse from a cherub's harp. The very first word is "serve;" and the proud spirit of unregenerate man kicks at that at once. "Serve." says the man, "why should I be a servant? I hate the yoke, and I will not bow my neck." The lawless spirit, fond of what it calls "free thought" and "free action," hates the sound of the word "serve." "I will be my own master," says the willful, wayward soul of the man who knows not what is meant by obedience, and has never drunk into the deep joy of submission to the Lord. "Serve?" he says, "let those do so who are calves enough to bow their necks, but as for me, I know no government but my own ungovernable will." But to the soul that has been subdued, delivered from the bondage of its own self-dominion—the soul that is humble, teachable, weaned from the world, and changed into a little child, the thought of service has heaven in it; for such a heart remembers that in the New Jerusalem they serve God day and night, and it looks forward to perfect service as being its perfect rest. Renewed minds accept "Ich dien"—*"I serve,"* as their motto, and feel ennobled by it.

The next word of our text, which we may well call the golden canticle of labor, is even more distasteful to the carnal mind. "Serve *the Lord."* Men's hearts are naturally atheists; they will not endure the thought of God. The most of men are careless and indifferent to their heavenly King; they remember all things except the God who made them. We find them willing to serve their country, to serve science, literature, art, trade, but, as for serving God, they will have none of it. The spirit of this age is too much that of Pharaoh. "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" To the philosophical mind it seems to involve an absurdity to serve a being whom you cannot see, whose voice you cannot hear, and whose existence is unfelt by the unspiritual, unawakened mind. Therefore the wise man turns upon his heels, and says that he will serve any other master soon-

er than serve the Lord. The man who has once known, who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and been made to enter into the Lord's covenant of mercy, and has seen under what obligations he is laid to the loving kindness and tender mercy of Jehovah, to such a man the very thought of serving God is liberty. He delights to run in the way of God's commandments, and the statutes of the Most High are to him sweeter than honey, or the droppings of the honeycomb. "Serve the Lord." "Ah," says the quickened spirit that has been made obedient by a work of divine grace within, "would God I could *always* serve Him, and never in thought, word, or deed rebel against His gracious will." To serve God is to reign. He who obeys the King of kings is himself a king.

As for the next word of my text, which contains the rarest sweetness of it, "Serve the Lord *with gladness,"* this is a point to which the mere carnal mind never did attain, and never will. Any connection between religion and gladness seems to the most of men to be very remote indeed. Many people attend to their "religion," as they call it, but it is downright slavery. They go up to their place of worship because it is a terrible necessity of custom that respectable people should meet in certain fixed places each Sunday; but they are glad when the service is short—exceedingly glad if it could be made so short as to be omitted altogether. They look upon their religious exercises as a tax which they pay to God, or rather, as a tax which they pay to respectability, for we live in a country where so many think it right to profess the Christian faith. The worldly religionists' service has no gladness in it. "Serve the Lord with gladness" seems to the carnal mind to be a perfect monstrosity; and yet, mark you, this is the test between the genuine and the hypocritical professor—by this one thing shall you know who it is who fears God, and who it is that does but offer Him the empty tribute of his lips. There is an old legend, that when the Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon, she posed him with many difficulties, and, among the rest, placed before him a vase of artificial flowers, which were so skillfully made that for a while Solomon could not tell which of the two bouquets of flowers were the handiwork of man, until he bade them open the window wide, and watched to see to which the bees would fly. No bees or flies would lodge upon the artificial, but only upon the genuine ones, for there alone they discerned the mystic sweetness which dwells in the secret aroma of the living bloom. Even so, observe the worldling's religion: it is beautifully constructed, well put together, it is everything to the eye that could be expected; but no winged delights ever alight on it, no joyous thoughts find honey there. As for the true believer in Jesus, he serves his God because he loves to serve Him; he assembles with the great congregation because it is his delight to worship the Most High. To him it is the greatest of all earthly joys, and a foretaste of joys celestial to serve the Lord with hands, and heart, and strength, and to spend and be spent for His glory. May God's grace bring us to know that the text does not mock us, but that it is a thing which is practicable to every believer—that we can serve God with gladness, yes, emphatically *with gladness*—with an overflowing pleasure unknown elsewhere. I ask you, before we go further, to let this be a point of judgment with every hearer as to whether his soul finds joy in his religion or not; let each of you inquire whether that which

you professes to possess ever causes you delight. With all our cares and sorrows, we who have believed have learned to rejoice in the name of our God; but the base-born professor dreads the majesty of heaven, and feels no flames of childlike love within his bosom. Like slaves, they fear the whip, and they know not the force of constraining love which rules within the hearts of adopted and heaven-born sons of God.

In our text, gladsome service is commended and commanded. We shall first notice *its secret springs;* then we will endeavor to track *its manifest streams;* then a word or two about *its difficulties;* and some other suggestions about *its excellence;* and then the conclusion; and briefly on each point.

I. The gladsome service of God has ITS SECRET SPRINGS.

These are too many for me to mention them all, but the following may serve as a sample. One main cause why the believer serves God with gladness is that *he is free from the bondage of the law.* When the believer serves the Lord, it is with no idea whatever of obtaining eternal life thereby. He does not go up to public worship; he does not respect the commandments of the Lord's house, because he thinks that thereby he shall escape from hell or obtain heaven. Far from this; he knows that he is saved; he understands that through faith in the Lord Jesus he has been delivered once and for all from the penalty of all his sins—they are all forgiven: he is not afraid of the consequences of them—they are blotted out forever; as for heaven, he knows that eternal life is his portion, as the gift of sovereign grace—he is secure in that. He is one with Jesus; nothing can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord, and full well he knows that where Christ is, there shall Christ's servants be, reigning with Him forever. Therefore the heir of heaven serves his Lord simply out of *gratitude;* he has no salvation to gain, no heaven to lose; all things are his by a covenant "ordered in all things and sure." And now, out of love to the God who chose him, and who gave so great a price for his redemption, he desires to lay himself out entirely to his Master's service. O you who are seeking salvation by the works of the law, what a miserable life yours must be! Why, you are haunted with the miserable foreboding that unless you do this and that, you will forfeit the good will of God, and perish! And you hope that if you diligently persevere in obedience, you may *perhaps* obtain eternal life, though, alas, none of you dare to pretend that you have attained it!

You toil and toil and toil, but you never get that which you toil after, and you never will, for, "by the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified." However holy or obedient you may be, good works are not the way of salvation; and, as you cannot get to London except by taking the road to London, although you may walk ever so earnestly in the wrong direction, so though you are ever so good and honest and excellent, you shall never attain heaven by these things, for this is not the door of life. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;" and since you who go about to lay another foundation set yourselves in opposition to God, you may build, but your building shall fall to the ground; you may weave, but your garments shall turn to cobwebs; you may toil and labor as in the fire, but you shall never obtain comfort by your own doings. O miserable slaves, your life is spent in

bondage; you shall never be fit to die: and now you know not what it is to live, for living, you dread to die, and dying, you tremble to meet your Judge. Nothing can cover a naked soul but the righteousness of our Lord Jesus. You may go to church or the meeting house; you may say prayers and read your Bibles, and do what you will besides, but bond slaves you are, and you shall not be heirs of the Promise, for what says the Scripture, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." The child of God works not *for* life, but *from* life: he does not work *to be* saved; he works *because he is* saved. More zealously than the most earnest person who trusts in works will the believer serve, and so he will prove that no power in the entire world is more mighty than the force of God's love. Not selfishly nor because of fear, but gratefully, joyfully, heartily, out of true affection the true servant of the Lord waits at his Master's doors.

Do you not see, then, how we can serve the Lord with gladness? Because, when we make mistakes in serving God, we know they will not destroy us; because, notwithstanding the thousand infirmities and imperfections of our service, we know that Jesus washes all away in His precious blood. When we sit down sometimes after a day's seeking to honor God, and deplore that we have so greatly failed in it, we do not despair, for we know that the righteousness which covers us has not to be spun by these fingers; we rejoice that we are accepted not in ourselves, but in the Beloved, and so we rise again, and go once more to "serve the Lord with gladness," because we are still His beloved, still dear to Him, notwithstanding 10,000 slips, and flaws, and errors, and mistakes—still in His covenant, still saved.

Another reason why the Christian serves God with gladness is, because *he has a lively sense of the contrast between his present service and his former slavery.* What a hard, cruel, Egyptian bondage, was that out of which Jesus brought us! We thought it liberty, but when our eyes were opened, we found it to be captivity itself, for we found that the wages of sin is death. When sin became exceedingly sinful in our esteem, then we felt the iron enter into our soul, and longed to break the chain. To serve the devil, even when he gives us most of the sweets of sin, is intolerable bondage to a sensible, awakened sinner; but to serve Christ, how pleasant, how joyful! Do but look into the face of the black prince, and you will see reason enough to abhor him; but gaze into the eyes of Immanuel, the Prince of princes, the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely, and you will feel that if His service involved lying in a jail, or burning at the stake, yet in comparison with the miseries of the bondage of sin, His "ways are ways of pleasantness." Jesus is the Master and Lord, whom to obey is perfect peace; but Satan, the foul tyrant, is one from whom we rejoice to have been delivered.

Moreover, the believer's joy in the Lord's service springs from the fact that *he serves God from the instincts of his new nature.* Every nature has its instinct. If the Maker creates a bird, it is not painful to that bird to fly, and no force is needed to make it take wing—its instinct is to do so. For a fish to swim is no troublesome matter: that element, which might be very distasteful to the bird, is natural enough and pleasing enough to the fish; now, when God creates in His people a spiritual nature, He puts into

them impulsive, energetic instincts, which push them forward or restrain them as the case may be. Take the case of the well-beloved, who is the pattern of all the family. When He was but a child, He was found in the temple hearing and asking questions of the rabbis; and when His father and mother asked Him how it was that He had left them, He said, "Know you not that I *must* be about My Father's business? Did you not know that there was a necessity laid upon Me, an uncontrollable impulse within Me which drove Me forward to accomplish the will of Him who sent Me?" So, when you see an earnest Christian working for God, and you inquire why he is earnest, he may well reply, "Do you not that I *must* be about my Father's business?" The genuine Christian, full of the love of God, cannot be an idler. "Woe is unto me," said the apostle, "if I preach not the gospel." To tell to others of the love of God becomes to the faithful heart no arduous service. Like Elihu, he can say, "I speak that I may be refreshed." I know that some Christians do not find it so: it is because the love of God in them has come to a low ebb, and the life of God is but feebly within; but the vigorous healthy Christian *must* serve the Lord, yes, and serve Him with gladness too, because he is then obeying the instincts of his new nature, and God has made our instincts, when we follow them, to be pleasurable.

The instincts of the new nature, when we follow them, lead us into service, and consequently there comes into our soul a pleasure unknown to those who are not partakers of the regenerate nature. I have said that to the Christian it is a delight to serve God, and so it is, because it exercises in him those powers which yield delight. There is always a delight in benevolence; now, to tell our fellow sinners the way of salvation is the exercise of the benevolence of our heart, and there must be pleasure in it. To serve God causes the exercise of faith, and to exercise faith is one of the grandest pleasures to which a mortal can attain. Therefore, to serve God with faith and confidence must be delightful. Believing service is not the performance of a work naturally irksome to us, to which we bring ourselves by effort; but Christian service is the doing of sacred duties, which to our new nature are congenial occupations, things in which we take our delights. Those grand old builders who erected the famous cathedrals of the olden times, and laid out so much time and skill in carving the ornaments, and piling the pinnacles, shall we pity them for having worked so hard? Far from it! No pity did they require. Pity would be wasted on them. It was their life's work. They were in their element when they were producing this thing of beauty, or that specimen of wondrous art. And so with the Christian! The service of God is not to him an employment from which he would escape even if he could. No; he feels it to be an intense delight, and only wishes that he could be more perfectly taken up with it.

Another reason why the Christian is conscious of great gladness in serving God is that *he has a sense of honor with it.* Did you ever reflect how wondrous a condescension it is in God to allow a creature to serve Him? "The cattle on a thousand hills are Mine," He says. "If I were hungry, I would not tell you." He sits on His throne, and establishes it by His own power. He has no dependence upon His creatures. The greatest of spirits He has ever made are as nothing before Him, and yet, look! He

condescends to be served by us! Can I give something to my Creator? Can I do a service to my Redeemer? May I lay my humble tribute at His feet to whom all things belong? Ah, then, how I am honored! It is an honor to receive from God, but a greater honor still to be a donor to God. Man is put in a very high place when God condescends to make him a co-worker with Himself in the economy of divine grace, and accepts from His creature the homage of his body and his soul. Now it is well known that every man will work what he feels to be an honor much more easily than that which he thinks degrades him. There have been thousands of enterprises undertaken by men when they have been put upon martial honor which they never would have undertaken for mere fee or reward. Men have gone to the cannon's mouth for the sake of glory. And shall the Christian be altogether insensible to the motive of honor? Shall he not feel it to be his greatest glory to serve his God? And will there not be from this a stream of joy flowing over all our holy work?

Furthermore, the believer, when he serves God, *knows that his service is not the highest place which he occupies.* "I am a servant," he says, "I am not ashamed of it—to serve God is royal dignity, but then I am not altogether and alone a servant." Here is the Christian's joy—he hears his Master say, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." Then he recollects that beyond being a friend he is a child. The spirit of adoption within him cries Abba Father. He looks upon the Lord Jesus Christ as his elder brother. Yes, and beyond that, he hears from the sacred Book that he is married to Christ. Jesus has become his bridegroom, and he is the beloved spouse. He understands that there is a union near and dear, vital and matchless, between him and his Master, so that Jesus is the Head, and he is a member of the same body. Do you see how the thought that the believer is more than a servant, enables him to do more than a servant could do, and gives him gladness in his service which the mere servant cannot understand?

Again, there comes over the Christian's mind a gentle thought which in his darkest moments yields him joy, namely, that *grace has promised a reward.* We are not to be rewarded *for* the merit of our works, but still the free grace of God has promised that we shall not toil for nothing. The diligent Christian looks for the time when he shall hear it said, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter you into the joy of your Lord." He is "steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as he knows that his labor is not in vain in the Lord." It may be that for the present he toils on, and no one gives him a good word—he sows the thankless flood, and no harvest springs from the bread cast upon the waters; but he can afford to wait—he has not measured things by the narrow inch of time, but he has taken a broad eternity into his consideration, and he knows that the time shall come when those who diligently serve on earth, by faith in Jesus Christ, shall participate in the glories of the coming King, and the bliss of the eternal inheritance. So the humble, trustful worker sets to his seal that God is true, and goes on in his service, waiting upon his gracious Master, not with despondency and timorous fear, but serving the Lord with gladness evermore. I think I

have thus shown you as well as I could this morning, the secret springs which sustain the Christian's gladness when he is engaged in service.

II. Secondly, let us trace some of the MANIFEST STREAMS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE IN THEIR GLADNESS.

Beloved, in the first place, we should always serve the Lord with gladness in the *public assemblies of His people.* The more hypocritical people are, the more solemnly miserable their outward aspect when at worship. As a general rule, I believe that those places of worship where it is thought to be wicked to ever have smiling faces, are dens of formalism where there is no life of God at all. I know this, if you go through Continental churches, perhaps two out of three of the preachers are downright infidels of some class or other; and you will find the most horribly sanctimonious faces, and tones, and manners among clergymen, especially among the worst of them. Not believing a word they say, they are obliged to pull as long a face as possible, to look as if they were in earnest, though they are not. I like to see you coming up to this place not as if you were going to a jail, but like children coming from school and going home to their Father's house. Last Sabbath week I was awakened at six o'clock, in the Hartz mountains, by the cheerful notes of a trumpet playing a sweet enlivening German air; it struck me that was a right fitting way to begin the Sabbath—to wake up with music, to leave off sleep with a dream of angels singing the songs of heaven, and to begin the day by uniting in their praise. Let each Sunday always begin so—not with the dull solemn note of the trombone, but with psaltery and harp with joyful sound. Alas, with many the cry is—"Here's another dull day in which the Crystal Palace is shut up, and all amusement denied us!" An English Sunday is called by many a dull and dreary day! Ah, you miserable heathens, well may you speak so: it must be dreary to you—but to the genuine Christian, the thought that the world's burden is laid aside, and that now he is to commune with heaven, is as the sweet sound of the trumpet, waking him to a day of feasting and delight.

Then when we come up to the house of God, what is there to make us sad? Is there not everything to make us happy? Shall we sing the praises of God mournfully, and imitate the worshippers of Moloch, who serve him with shrieks and groans? No, the God we adore is to be praised with happy hearts, smiling faces, and joyful notes. And when we pray to Him shall we be sorrowful? To pray to our Father—a child to spread his needs before his father—can that be bondage? No, blessed be His name, if there is a sweet place on earth, it is the mercy Seat where earth communes with heaven. And when we listen to the reading of the word of God, or the preaching of His truths, shall that be weariness? Yes, when we have no part or lot in it; when it is like reading a will in which we have no legacy; but if the gospel is preached as *our* gospel, the gospel of *our* salvation, and we have a share in it, what can so inspire our soul with joy? Yes, let the bells of your heart ring merry peals on Sunday. O you chosen seed, be glad, and of all the days in the week, look at the first as the prime glory of all the feast days of the soul. Do not pull the blinds down; let the sun shine into the room more cheerily than on weekdays. Your God is happy, and would have you happy; and if all the other six days you have

to bear your burdens, yet, at least, cast them aside on this resurrection day, when you must not slumber in the grave of sorrow.

Well, but by serving God, we do not mean merely when we come to a place of worship; for to us, in one sense, there are no places of worship. All places are places of worship to a Christian; wherever he is, he ought to be in a worshipping frame of mind. Brothers and sisters, when we serve God at the family altar, let us try as parents to mix gladness with it. It is a great mistake when the Christian parent makes the reading and prayer in the family a dull monotonous work. Let us be cheerful and happy at family worship. In your private devotions you should also "Serve the Lord with gladness." When you get half an hour or more with the Most High, ask Him to enable you to carry out that command of this 100th Psalm—"Serve the Lord with gladness." But then the Christian's service for God lasts all the day long! The genuine Christian knows that he can serve God as much in the shop as he can in the meeting house; he knows that the service of God can be carried on in the farmyard and market, while he is buying and selling, quite as well as in singing and praying. Should not we do our business much better if we looked upon it in that light? Would it not be a happy thing, if, regarding all our work as serving God, we went about it with gladness? Perhaps your work is very difficult; well, be not an eye-servant, or a man-pleaser, but with singleness of heart serve God in that work, and you will perform it with gladness. Perhaps your situation is one in which your toil is very arduous. Consider that God has put you there. If you cannot see a door of removal, accept what God has given; and accepting it from a Father's hand, you will be able to serve Him with gladness. That is a real religion which goes with us through all the acts of daily life: that is a sham religion which only shows itself when a man is on his knees. A few days ago, in the mountains, we went down in a valley to see a wonderful waterfall, a marvelous sheet of water precipitating itself from lofty rocks, and there sat our German friends by scores contemplating it, and reverently admiring its sublimities. As I looked at the cascade, the thought struck me it was rather too orderly to be altogether what it professed to be; and, looking on, I noticed that the floods which poured down from the rocks had suddenly diminished, as if the supply of the liquid element was exhausted. Truly so, we found that this wonderful waterfall was played three or four hours a day, and was an *artificial* wonder! I walked away feeling wonderfully taken in, coming to see a cascade of a kind that was played three hours a day! And there is plenty of religion of that sort; it is not genuine; it is played three hours a day, or so many hours a week. At certain set times, if you catch the man right, he will be very gracious and godly, but if you stumble in when he is immersed in all the cares of the world, you find he is all a sham. O beloved, let our religion show itself throughout the whole of life; let us go about our business with a holy gladness because we are serving the Lord. Let us be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, and putting gladness into the whole thing.

Above all, let gladness sparkle in all those actions which we feel called upon to perform for our Master's service. Dear Sunday school teachers, make the Sunday happy, and your children happy, by serving the Lord

with gladness. City missionaries and Bible women do not go round your districts as though you were undertakers' men, but go there with gladness, serving the Lord. Preacher, throw your soul into your work, do whatever you undertake to do for the Master, with a soul flashing with fire: look upon it not as bondage, but joy, and serve the Lord in it with a sacred eagerness and delight. Thus I have tried to show some of the manifest streams of the Christian's delight.

III. But, now, somebody says, "It is much easier to say this than to practice it, and though it may be very easy indeed to tell us to serve the Lord with gladness, does the preacher himself always find it easy to do so?" Well, this is not the place for him to make confessions, but he is quite prepared to admit that it is not always easy to serve God with gladness; that if it were, we should not need to be told to do it, but on account of THE DIFFICULTY OF IT, we are therefore more often bid to be happy. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again," says the apostle, "I say, Rejoice." If he had felt it would be easy, it was sufficient to tell us once, but the repetition shows the difficulty. Our inbred sin—is not that enough, when we serve God, to make us do it with the bitter cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" Yes, but we shall be delivered, I thank God, through Christ our Lord, we shall be delivered from the bondage of our corruption. Let us not think so much about the disease as about the remedy; while we sigh over infirmities, let us bless God that there is a way of glorying in infirmities because the power of Christ will be manifested therein. Let us serve God in infirmities with the glad thought that we shall not always be imperfect, but by-and-by shall be in the glory of our Master, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Outward trials, again—how hard it is to serve God with gladness when one is losing an estate, or when the cupboard is bare, and there is scarcely money to provide the children with clothes! Yet the Christian does not live upon what he *sees* alone; he knows there is a secret strength, a secret Helper, and he knows how to go to God in times of outward trouble, and cast his care upon Him who cares for him. Have you ever read, "All things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose?" Does not that lantern show a light over your dark path? Beloved, may the Holy Spirit enable you to go on serving God with gladness, even though the fig tree should not blossom, and though there should be no herd in the stall. "Yes, but," says another, "It is difficult to serve God with gladness when placed in the midst of the ungodly!" So the best of men have found. They have hung their harps upon the willows sometimes. How could they sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If you cannot sing His song, yet, let me tell you, go on in His work. If you cannot touch the harp strings, yet still serve Him, and by-and-by the Lord who gives you grace to serve, will give you divine grace to sing; for though you are a stranger, yet you are not a stranger with your God; He is with you, and you are a sojourner with Him: though in the midst of the ungodly, you walk as in a furnace—yet, when the three holy children were in the fire, there was a fourth with them, and so there is one with you like unto the Son of God. Brothers and sisters, we are not to take up those duties which we think to be easy, and to leave those we think to be difficult, but the more difficult the

command of God may seem to be, the more earnestly must we set ourselves to carry it out by divine aid. The text, "Serve the Lord with gladness," may seem to be very difficult to those of a gloomy temperament, or depressed spirit, or those who are under trying circumstances, but, O beloved, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us; what sense says is impossible, faith accomplishes, therefore let us lift up our hearts and say, "heavenly Father, help us to serve You with gladness according to Your command."

IV. In the last place, there is much EXCELLENCE in cheerful service.

Is it possible that when we serve God with gladness, we thereby escape many Fatherly chastisements which otherwise might come upon us? I was reading, reading with some degree of fear, in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, at the 47th verse, these words, "Because you served not the Lord your God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things; therefore shall you serve your enemies which the Lord shall send against you, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon your neck." I was wondering whether if we receive God's mercies, and do not serve Him joyfully, it may not be more than probable that He will withdraw His hand of mercy for a while, and make us smart under the hand of chastisement till we humble ourselves before Him. Let us serve God with gladness while we have health and strength—we may soon be on the sick bed. Let us be glad to have anything to give to His cause—we may be reduced to poverty, and have no place where to lay our heads. While we have the power to serve God, let us do it with gladness, being thankful that we are enabled to do it, or else it may be, seeing we prove unworthy of those things, He may make the sky to be covered with clouds, and send us dark days and bitter seasons. Do you not think, too, that when Christians serve God with gladness, they derive many benefits themselves? Does not the Lord water those who water others? Is it not the way with Him, when He sees us diligent in service, to give us greater comforts? We are not under the economy of law, as I have said before, but still we are under the paternal economy of God's house. Just as we do with our own children, if we see them obedient, we are apt to give them much more than we should do if they were constantly seeking to have their own way and their own will. No father uses the rod from choice; he only uses it if driven to it. So is it with us. If we, as dear children, bring forth much fruit unto God, we shall have much boldness in prayer and much communion with God, and a thousand blessings which otherwise we might not receive shall be ours. Besides, beloved, does not our God deserve to be served with gladness? Oh, when we get to heaven, if we could have regrets, would not this be one, that we had not served Him better? When we served the world, some of us, we used to do it very heartily. When some of you were in the devil's service, what bold soldiers you were! Nothing was too hot or too heavy in his cause. And shall we serve Christ with less zeal than men serve the great enemy of souls? Our Master deserves to have the best love, the warmest confidence, the sternest perseverance, the utmost self-denial—let us seek to give Him these, and to give them with a cheerful heart.

Besides, if we would do good to our fellow men, we must serve God with gladness. I believe thousands of young people are kept from considering the gospel by the gloom of some professors. I know that the world constantly makes this its excuse for not being religious, that if it began to think of God it would have to give up its happiness. O Christians, I would have your faces so gleam with the Light of heaven that even the ungodly, if they care not for your secret life, may love the manifest joy that springs from it. Many a young woman has been led to think of Christ by the holy cheerfulness of a godly mother. There is no doubt that Christian servants have often been the wedge, in the hand of God, to break a way for the gospel into ungodly families by their holy, cheerful conduct. Talk of religion by all manner of means, but above all, live religion, and let your religion be cheerful. Let the world see that you serve a good Master. Do not go about slandering the King of Zion, and say He starves His people, and makes them of a sad countenance. When the four young men in Babylon would not defile themselves with the King's meat: "And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse than the children which are of your sort? Then shall you make me endanger my head to the king." But they put it to the test, and said, "Let our countenances be looked upon before you, and the countenances of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as you see, deal with your servants. So he consented to them in this matter, and tested them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." We will put it to the test too. We will try if our joy is not greater than the worldling's. We will stand foot to foot with them and see the result.

Now, beloved, we have come to a conclusion, but I must have two or three last words. Beware of being like those speculative Christians who do not serve God at all, but are content to play games of puzzles with the Bible. It seems to be the genius of some professors, nowadays, to take up with explaining prophecies, or finding out novel interpretations of the types, while they forget to do good to the people among whom they dwell. Let me warn you against that. The life of the Christian should be *service*, not speculation. If you have time and leisure, addict yourselves to the pursuit of knowledge in the Word of God, and despise not prophecies. Give a fair place to everything, but still always understand that all the speculations in the world, all the understandings of prophecy in the world, are not worth the snapping of a finger compared to bringing forth fruit unto righteousness in the feeding of Christ's sheep and lambs. That is the business of Christ's shepherds. Our business is to save souls. Brothers and sisters, you will hear me expounding the revelation one day; that is, when there is not another of the elect to save. When all the chosen are saved, we will preach upon the deep mysteries of Daniel and Ezekiel, but as long as souls are unsaved, we mean to keep to the plain gospel—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the simple gospel of Jesus. Take this home with you, you who are so fond of knotty points, serve the Lord, and give up your star-gazing; and if you want gladness, you will

find it there, but you will not find it in your endless genealogies, and looking into the future.

There are other professors, too, who will do anything rather than serve God. The little service they do is done as slovenly as possible, and they are always unhappy. They want a comforting ministry! They want to hold on to the promises! My dear brother, it is most probable what you need is neither. You need to serve God, for there is gladness. If some of you were to take a class in a Sunday school, you would soon find your spirits revive. Some of you ill-natured Christians who find the Sunday drag heavily, if you were to go up into that alley or court to visit sick folk, you would find your hearts grow glad. Only try it, now, and give us a report, and if you do not find it a pleasant thing, I am much mistaken.

Our last word shall be a rehearsal of the text, "Serve the Lord with gladness." Do not let us get to be like Martha, who complained because she served alone. Suppose we do; the fewer men, the greater honor; and if Mary will not serve the Master as we wish that she should, yet as she sits at the feet of Christ, we will thank God that there are diversities of operations, but the same Lord, and we will not get gloomy in spirit because we are not all serving God in one direction. Let us serve God with gladness, not like the elder brother in the parable, who said, "Lo, these many years did I serve you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." Why had not the father given him a kid that he might make merry? Because he had never asked him! So if you and I have been at work in heaviness for years, like the elder brother, let us ask the Father to let us have a feast too; and the surest way to get it is to go out into the fields, and see if you cannot find some poor wandering Brother or sister—for if you do get a feast, it will be when the prodigal comes home.

The pith and marrow of what I have to say is, do not sleep away the few hours of this mortal life, but be up and diligent in the cause of Jesus Christ, and be glad in it. Be glad, if you are saved yourselves, that you are called to be the means of saving others; and so with holy service, let us begin a new period of time, and go on till God shall take us up to serve Him with perfect gladness where they see His face, and never sin, but from the rivers of His grace, drink endless pleasures.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 147.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE WATER OF LIFE
NO. 770

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

"The woman said to Him, Sir, give me this water."
John 4:15.

YOU will remember that our Savior had been speaking to the woman of Samaria concerning living water. He had endeavored to catch her attention by using a metaphor to her work and her position. Water was uppermost in her thoughts, and Jesus sanctified the element to His own gracious end. Sitting at the well's mouth, I think I can see His earnest face, and note the woman's wondering eyes while He talked to her as she had never been spoken to before concerning water which caused a man never to thirst again. At first the woman raised questions: the skeptical part of her nature took its turn and quibbled, and carped, and argued. "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep," and so on. Do you not see all the elements of the infidel in her? But she is in good hands, and soon she has passed from the period of questioning into that of petitioning, and she cries this time, "Sir, give me this water." She was still I am afraid, very ignorant. She did not even understand her own petition. That is clear from the words which follow the text, "That I thirst not, neither come here to draw." She was giving a material meaning to a spiritual utterance. She was thinking of the water that could moisten her lips, when Christ was speaking of that living water, His own grace and love, which touches the heart and the heart only. Her eyes were dark, but her face was turned the right way; and, best of all, Jesus was there, who can lead the blind in a way which they know not. It will be all well with her, you may leave her alone, and think of yourselves.

I hope I am now conversing with some here who have gotten clear of this woman's ignorance, and have gone away also, as she did, from the period of questions; you know best who you are and where you are, but I hope you are desirous to partake of the divine grace which saves. You have got away from raising difficulties. You have had enough of that unprofitable hair-splitting and cobweb-making. You feel that you get no good by constantly insinuating doubts as to the possibility of your salvation, and questioning whether Christ is a Savior or not, and so you are about to leave the skeptical business, and try another route. You are now arrived at the point of desiring, not, I hope, the terminus of the route, but only the first or second station. I am glad that you have come so far. If there is grace to be had, you are saying, "O that I might have it!" If there is pardon, peace, eternal life, you believe all that Jesus Christ says of it, and you want to possess it. You are stretching out your hands, like the drowning man who is ready to catch at the plank. Your desires are

awake; your better thoughts are no longer slumbering. You have broken away from indifference and obstinacy, and you are now anxious and desirous to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ.

It is to you that I wish to speak this evening, and I shall first take the text, *and try to use it to excite your desire still further by a description of the water spoken of in the text;* secondly, I shall *try to assure your hearts by some remarks upon the likelihood of your obtaining this water;* and then we shall close *by urging you not to leave this house of prayer until the prayer has been registered in heaven, "Lord, give me this water; give me this water tonight!"*

I. To begin, then, I am TO TRY TO EXCITE YOUR DESIRE BY A DESCRIPTION OF THE WATER SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT.

Water is an essential element in the natural world. There is a spiritual world, in which describing, we are obliged to use analogies taken from the natural world; and the grace of God in the mental and the spiritual world, is just what water is in the natural world. You need water as a man; you must have it; on certain occasions it becomes an imperative necessity: you must drink or die. You need divine grace as a man, not for your body, but for your soul, and it is imperative that you should have it, or else your soul will first be in pain here, and then at death the pangs of remorse will seize it, and afterwards an everlasting thirst, an unsatisfied need, will be the second death to you.

The grace of God is like water in no less than eight senses. But let me not alarm you. I will not weary you; be sure of that, for I long to win you, and weariness will not serve my purpose. I shall only mention the eight parallels with a few remarks, and pass rapidly on from each one.

1. Water, first, *is thirst-removing,* and so is the grace of God. The man who drinks water, thirsts not, his bodily need is removed; the man who receives the grace of God in his heart, gets that which his nature is lacking, and his painful longings are over. Man by nature is so foolish that he does not know what his nature needs, but he feels that it needs something. Awakened men talk to themselves in this fashion, "I need—I do not know what I need—but I know I need something which the world cannot give me, which I cannot find within myself, which my fellow men cannot bestow upon me; I need a something: O my God, what is it? Tell me what it is!" Friend, if you are in this condition, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is just the thing for you, for in it the Lord not only tells you what you need, but He presents it to you. He tells you that you need His love; that if His grace is shed abroad in your heart, and your sin is pardoned, and you are made to be His child, and accepted through Christ Jesus, then will your soul say, "Now I have what I needed; now I need no more; I can sit still and say, Blessed be God that my desires are full. The aching void which the world could never fill is now filled to overflowing, and my soul has what it always needed though it did not know what it really needed. I can sit down now perfectly content!" It is a grand thing for a man to be able to say, "I am satisfied," but the genuine believer in Christ can say just that. "You have satisfied my mouth with good things; so that

my youth is renewed as the eagle's." Believers in Jesus carry the pearl of content in their bosoms. Jesus takes away the restless spirit, and gives us rest. Jesus is the door that fits the heart, and when He is near to us He shuts out the world's cold and heat, and gives us sweet content. O ambitious Man, you who run after something, and you cannot tell what it is that can gratify your immortal spirit, turn to the cross, for at the foot of it there springs a sacred fountain of soul-satisfying delight, and if you will but stoop and drink, your seeking shall be over, and you shall want no more. There is satisfaction for the deepest longings of heart, and head, and conscience, in the fountain which springs from the wounds of Jesus. Faith is the silver cup. Dip it into the overflowing stream and drink. O Holy Spirit put the cup to my poor thirsty brother and sister's lips!

2. Secondly, water is also *life-preserving.* In the wilderness, where there is no water, the lips become chapped; the skin is dried; the tongue is like a firebrand, and the mouth is like an oven; and the weary traveler must drink or die. O for a draught of water there! A bag of diamonds could not buy a cup of water there! Priceless is the life draught. And far out on the salt, salt sea, with—

"Water, water everywhere,
But not a drop to drink,"

the mariner, though he may seek to satisfy himself with the brine around him, feels that it will be death sooner or later to him unless he can get some pure, clear, refreshing drops of water to drink. Drop, you heavens in pity, or let some friendly boat see the castaways. Such is the grace of God to the soul of man. The whole world over, there is nothing that can save a soul apart from the grace of God. Your good works can no more save you than the salt sea can give the sailor drink. Ceremonies can no more fill your heart with peace, and give it life, than the hot sand of the wilderness can quench the thirst of the weary traveler. God must lead you to the river of eternal life flowing out of the rock that was struck. You must get grace through Jesus Christ, or hope shall never dawn upon you, but despair's midnight shall be your everlasting portion, where lost spirits wail out their undying lives in one endless death. O soul, if you get God's grace, you shall never die! Do you believe this? If that grace of God shall come flowing into your soul, you shall possess eternal life, an immortal principle which shall bid defiance to the grave, and make you sing in the very jaws of death, for He who drinks of this water, shall live in Christ forever. "He who lives and believes in Me shall never die." "He who believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." This grace of God, then, is life-preserving, as well as thirst-quenching; have you found it so? For, friend, I cannot afford to let you hear me, and yet escape a squeeze or two. If you forget this sermon, it shall not be because I did not press you to remember it.

3. Water, in the third place, is *filth-purging.* Man seeks no more than to get to the stream to wash when he is defiled. Many and many a time in passing through a country, the poor traveler comes to a brook so clear that he can see his face reflected in it, and he stoops down and washes

his brow again and again, and takes his bath, and goes his way all bright and shining, as though he had exchanged sorrow for gladness, and received the oil of joy for mourning. Now, the guilty sinner, and such are we all by nature, however foul he may be, has but to stoop down at the river of eternal grace and wash, and he shall be clean. This stream can take out spots which nothing else can remove. Our sin is of such a crimson dye, naturally, that it might contaminate the Atlantic before it should be washed away, but this water of life can do it; it takes away the stain of blasphemy and lust; it removes the pollution of theft and murder. All manner of sin shall be forgiven unto that man who comes to the cross and trusts in Jesus. Whoever believes in the world's great Redeemer, shall find full and complete pardon for every offense that he has committed. O try it, you blackest of the black, if you are here! You who have gone to the greatest extent of sin, cast your guilty soul into this fountain, and see if you do not rise from it with your flesh like that of a little child, clean and pure, and not a spot remaining on you. This filth-removing is the grace of God streaming from the cross, where Jesus suffered in our place the wrath which was due to us for our transgressions—

"Calvary's wonders let us trace,
Justice magnified in grace;
Mark the purple streams, and say,
Thus my sins were washed away."

Friend, can you do this by faith, trusting for pardon in the blood of God's dear Son?

4. Water, again, is well known very frequently *to be softening.* There are some things which, when laid in water, soon lose their hardness, and become soft and pliable. This water of the grace of God, which it is my longing desire to commend to you, has a marvelous softening power. Adamant, millstone, yes, the nether millstone, northern iron and steel, have been melted when laid to soak in this Fountain. The hardest heart yields before the power of the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus. I think I hear one of you exclaim, "That is good news for me; I know that Christ can pardon me, but I cannot feel my sin as I ought; I am such a stiff-necked sinner, so hardened, so perverse, I cannot feel my need as I would wish to." soul, if the grace of God shall flow upon your heart, it shall turn the stone, by a wondrous transformation, into flesh at once. There is no stubbornness which the grace of God cannot overcome. What a blessed thing it is for the preacher that he has not to give his hearers soft hearts, nor even to find tender hearts in them to begin with; how delightful it is for him to remember that he preaches a gospel which works wonders, wonders even greater than the rod of Moses; for when with the gospel we smite even a rock, penitential streams gush forth, and yet more, the rocky soul is itself dissolved under a sense of sin. O that some Saul of Tarsus might be washed by this stream tonight! He would no longer be the enemy of God's church, but would seek out some poor disciple to ask him what he must do to be saved. It is heart-softening water. May the Lord give it to every one of us who have hard hearts; gladly

would I bathe in it anew, that I might the more tenderly feel for you. Friend, will you never feel for yourself?

5. In the fifth place, this water has the property, like earthly water, *of being fire-quenching.* There is nothing like water after all, with all your new inventions, for putting out fire. We run for the engines and turn on the main—what can we do better? But there are fires that burn within the human heart, deep volcanic fires fed from the depths of hell, furious flames which roar within the inner man, and soon roll over in torrents of sin-lava in his daily life—these are fires which never will be put out except by heavenly water. Oh, that fire of lust! How many a man has been consumed by it! It has devoured him as the fire devours the stubble. But when the grace of God comes, how soon that fire is dampened, and even quenched forever! And there are other fires which burn in the soul—the fire of envy and of malice, the flames of anger and of unholy desire—how these will rage and glow until the grace of God comes! I know it puzzles many a man to know how he could live without such-and-such sins. "Oh," he says, "I could not live without them, I have fallen into the habit of them, and I must have them." Ah, but you shall be made a new man, such a new man that if you were to meet your old self, you would avoid the wretch or struggle with him in deadly hand-to-hand combat, out of sheer hatred to so mean a thing. Let me tell you, you will never be on good terms with your old self as long as you live. You will hate that old self of yours, and it will be your daily desire to kill him. You will try to drive the nails through his hands and feet, and crucify him upon the cross of Jesus; and you will not be content unless you can kill him daily, mortifying him with his affections and his lusts. Oh, mighty grace of God that can put out the flames of sin! O sinner, the very flames of hell are put out by this grace of God; I mean as far as the saved soul is concerned—for the soul that is washed in this fountain, there is no hell in which God can punish it. How can He punish a pardoned sinner? How can he that is in Christ Jesus be cast into the flames?—

"No condemnation now I dread,
For justice smote my Surety's head."

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" He who has Christ to be his substitute is beyond all fear of hell. He can look down into that dread abyss, and feel that there is not a burning coal there for him, and that whoever may perish, yet he, being in Christ Jesus, can never die. Friend, have the fires in your soul met with this glorious antagonist? Are the engines of grace casting their floods upon your soul? Let Conscience give its reply, and let it have your ear.

6. A sixth property is one that is not found in ordinary water, and that is that it is *a spring-creating water.* Wherever the water of life falls, it makes a new spring, which begins to bubble up directly. By this I mean that if the grace of God enters into a man's heart, it is an immortal principle, and, as the Savior says, "Out of the midst of him shall flow rivers of living water." "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." What a great difference there is between a pool and a running spring! Frequently in crossing the Alps,

when one has been very faint and thirsty, it has been a sweet rest to sit down by a running spring, and wash one's face and feet, or bathe one's self in it. You may have walked till you are very footsore—you sit down to bathe your feet, and if you have found a mere pool, you will stir the bottom of it, and it will soon be very filthy; but when it is a running spring, you can sit and wash, and wash, and wash again, and if you do stir the sand at the bottom, the earth is all gone in a moment, because the water still comes bubbling up clear and fresh, and therefore it is always clean. So it is with the grace of God in a Christian: it never gets flat, and dull, and dead; and the daily pollutions and washing of our feet do not stain it, because it is a living spring, and arises from those "fresh springs" which David sings about which he rejoiced to find in the Lord his God. It is very hard work to play the part of a Christian if you have not a spring within you. For a man to have to keep up year after year a profession without life, why, it must be slavish work. Do you think that I would come and take a seat in this place, or in any other place of worship, and occupy it merely because it was respectable to do so if I had no care for it? I would as soon be a slave! Base is the man who even in his religion is the serf of tyrant fashion! To come up to the house of God because you love to be there, and to sing because you cannot help singing, and to unite with God's people because "birds of a feather"' must "flock together" and you love to be among them—why there is something in that, something which tastes of reality and sincerity.

He who has no great deeps of godliness in his soul makes bondage of religion; he lives the life of a dog, and does not even get the crumbs from under the table as his portion. Mark you, brothers, it is harder to preach without this spring than it is to hear without it, because if you have not a spring in you, you may go foraging this dead man's books, and that other dead man's stores, to find a subject, but you will soon run dry; but if God the Holy Spirit is a spring within you, you may remain full of the precious truth of God, and pour it out as long as God shall give you utterance, and you shall not run dry. What a blessing it is when the living water makes a spring within the Christian! What a curse to be one of the stagnant ponds of formality exhaling the putridity of hypocrisy. Friend, where are you? I must have my hand on you again, what are you in this matter as in the sight of God?

7. Seventh, it is *fruit-producing water*. What fruit would there be upon the trees, what pasture in the meadows, what harvest in the field, if it were not for the rain? Everything would be barren without water, and even where there is fruit, if there is not, also, a fair share of water, what poor stuff it is! When I was in the country in June, and there were some heavy showers, I could not help thinking what good they were doing. There was the corn just needing plumping out, and the rain came to fill it, and to make the ears full. It might have been corn, of course, without it, but the ear is likely to be fuller when the drought is gone. So, brothers and sisters, we may produce some little fruit when we have but little grace, but if we had more grace, how that fruit would plump out! How

would our fruit be more rich, and fat, and mellow! Our service to God would be improved and perfected if we had more of this fruit-producing water! You cannot serve God without His grace. You cannot give Him true praise, or true prayer, or true service, or anything that is acceptable unless He first shall *give you* of the rain of His grace—grace for grace. "By their fruits shall you know them." Friend, what fruit have you? O that grace may turn the barren fig tree into a good fruit-bearing tree!

8. And, lastly upon this point; *it is heaven-ascending water.* You know there is a rule of this sort in hydrostatics, that water will rise to its own level. Not long ago, I thought such things were gone out. I was riding along where the road was in a little cutting, and a spout was actually constructed over the road to carry water from one field to the other; and it was dripping fast upon the passengers and making an ugly place in the road. Now, they might easily have taken the little stream under the road, and up again in a pipe; but, I suppose, when the spout was made, it was not known to those who made it that water will rise as high as its source. Now, the grace of God will rise as high as its source. If you and I have grace that began with us, it will never get higher than we are. If you have grace that the priest gave you when you were christened, it will never get higher than the priest; but if you get the true grace of God which descends from heaven, it will take you as high as the New Jerusalem from which it came. High up in the throne of God are the everlasting springs of divine mercy; at the foot of divine sovereignty it wells up a spring, clear as crystal, pure without a stain, and it flows down to earth, leaping down by the way of the cross. And it will ascend as high as its source. It will go up to the throne again, that is where it came from, and it will rise to its own level, and it will float you up there with it. If, by the grace of God, you have been taken up by the stream of Jesus' dying love, it will take you up to its own Source, and where God is, there you shall be. Because you have been made to taste, to feel, and to be saturated with the grace that came from God, from a divine source, you shall also have a divine portion forever. The rivers go to the sea because they originally came from the sea. Did not the sun kiss the sea, and make it ascend to him in clouds, that it might descend in rain? And so all the rivers of grace in us shall flow into the sea from where they came—the bottomless, shoreless sea of everlasting love, because that is the eternal source and fountain of them all. Clouds of suffering went up from the heart of Jesus to return to earth in showers of mercy for poor sinners. Fiend, do you know anything about this in your very soul?

Now, I have thus spoken of the grace of God which is revealed in Jesus Christ. I only hope that someone here may say, "I wish I were washed in it! I wish my thirst were satisfied with it! I wish that my soul were made to overflow with it! I wish that I might be lifted up to heaven though its energy!" Oh, then, soul, I am glad you have the desire. Turn it into a prayer, and let the prayer be the text, "Give me this water!"

II. And now, with great brevity indeed, we shall take the second point, that is, TO CHEER YOUR HEARTS WITH SOME REFLECTIONS UPON THE LIKELIHOOD OF YOUR GETTING THIS LIVING WATER.

I am supposing now that you really want it. If you say, "Sir, give me this water," you will have it; and I will tell you why I think you will have it—because, in the first place, *I do not think that an ordinary man would deny another water.* If I stood by a well, and you approached me, and said, "Sir, give me this water," I would say, "As much as you like of it" Who would not give water? It is the most common of gifts. Even in the East, with all the value that is attached to water there, the Savior mentions that as one of the most ordinary acts of benevolence. "Whoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, He shall in no wise lose his reward." Who will deny another a glass of water? Then note that according to our text, the giving of saving grace is to the great Redeemer no more than the giving of water to you! Grace is a priceless gift for you to receive, but to Jesus it is a delight to give it. If you give water, you have a little less water left, but if Christ gives grace, He has not any grace the less. He still has as much grace in the inexhaustible fullness which dwells in His adorable person. As the sun is just as bright for all its shining, and the ocean still full, notwithstanding all the clouds exhaled from it, so Jesus is as abundant as ever in pardoning mercy and saving power. I tell you that for Jesus Christ to be gracious is as much according to His nature as it is for you and for me to be generous enough to give away water. The blessing of poor needy souls is no labor with Jesus, no loss to Him, no tax upon Him; all the pain and cost He has borne long ago, and now to save the guilty is His reward in which He sees the recompense of His travail.

Now, if in this place the grace of God had been compared to gold, that metaphor would have suited well to express its value; but you would have said, "Who gives gold away?" But here it is compared with water, water which man freely gives, and which our Lord Jesus never denies to those who seek it of Him. I do not believe, then, if an ordinary man will give away water—and Christ compares His grace with water, that He will let you say, "Sir, give me this water!" And then send you away without it! Friend, be not so unbelieving as to think that the Lord Jesus is ungenerous and unkind, but ask for the living water and it shall be given you.

Again, *if you would refuse water to some persons, I am very sure that you would not refuse it to a thirsty person.* If you saw him panting, and the hot sweat starting to his brow, and if he could scarcely speak, but had only strength enough to gasp out, "Sir, if you would but give me a cup of water, I would bless you for it with all my heart," why, you would run and bring out the sparkling crystal, and feel a great pleasure in seeing him drink. Would you not? I am sure you would. Now, if you are a thirsty soul, I am quite sure Christ will give you the water of life. He will give it to any who ask, for He refuses none; and to you He will give it so quickly that He will seem to give it twice over. He will not let you thirst in

vain, for has He not promised, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water"? "Oh," says one, "how I desire to be saved! How I long to have Christ!" You may have Him then, for Jesus Christ never denied a thirsty sinner, never refused to give of His substance to the poor, His clothes to the naked, or His medicine to the sick. He came on purpose to bless such. I say, that in all likelihood you shall have the blessing if you will but pray earnestly, "Lord, give me this water;" no, more, there is a certainty of it!

Another reason gives me comfort for you, and that is—*there certainly is plenty of it,* for the apostle John says he saw "a river of the water of life." Now, nobody is afraid, when there is a deep, broad, flowing river to draw from. Who fears to exhaust the Thames or drain the Danube by his thirst? Moreover, as John Bunyan reminds us, a river is free to everybody to drink. The source of it is private. Many rivers rise in a park or private grounds, but the river itself is public. As soon as it becomes a considerable stream, it becomes a public highway, and a universal water supply. It is free; it flows the way it wills. Rivers possess a sort of sovereignty, you cannot bid them flow in a straight line, or order them by rules of geometry; they will have their own sweet will. If the river chooses to go by one town and not by another, it will have its way, who may try to stop it? But while it is sovereign in its course and direction, yet it is free for public use; the cattle come to drink, and even a poor dog is not refused when he gets to the river's brink; if he wants to lap and cool his feverish tongue in the dog days, who shall say no to him? And you, poor sinner, you shall find the grace of God free to you, for there is enough of it; it is up to the banks; no, it overflows the banks; there is a flood of it, such a flood that there never can by any possibility be any lack, though all men should come. Though 10,000 times 10,000 should come, there would still be found sufficient grace in Jesus to meet the needs of all, for whom the Lord brings, the Lord can provide for in Christ Jesus. The grace of God is sovereign in its choice, and discriminating in its course, but still it is free to all thirsty ones who long to partake of its everlasting fullness.

I am comforted, also, by another thought, namely, *that this river is on purpose* for the thirsty. I am sure I do not know why there is mercy in the world unless it is for those who need it because of their sin and misery. What could Christ have made atonement for except for sinners? It is not possible that the beloved Physician came all the way from heaven to heal those who were well and needed no medicine. It is not likely that He opens His great granaries to feed the nations who have a harvest of their own; it must be that our Joseph has stored up the wheat for hungry perishing ones. O you who need, come and welcome, for the fountain is opened especially for you; it flows that such as you may come and drink.

Friend, shall our invitations have no power with you? O Holy Spirit, make men willing in this the day of Your power!

I feel sure, too, that you who seek the Lord will find His grace, *because there never has been one refused yet.* A dear brother, who I believe is now present, told me that he owed his conversion in early life to hearing a sentence or two of a sermon from a man whose name he never knew, but whom he heard preach standing on a log of wood on a village green. He had never gone to listen to the gospel anywhere, but happened to be straying through the village, and he heard the man say that there never was a soul that sincerely sought God through Jesus Christ, but what ultimately, sooner or later, it was brought into a state of peace. And let me say to you all—it may sink into some heart, and one day yield it comfort—it shall not be said by you in eternity that you sought the Lord and He would not hear you. I remember what comfort this gave to me when I heard my mother say, that she had heard many wicked things in the world, but she never heard a man wicked enough to say, that he had sincerely sought God through Jesus Christ, and yet had been refused. When I heard that, I thought I could say it, for I was confident that I had sought the Lord, but I had had no comfortable answer. But I have never said it, I have never had cause to say it, for before I could be driven to that state of despair, I looked to Him and was lightened, and so I am persuaded it shall be with you. There never was one refused who said, "Give me this water," and you shall not be the first.

To close this point, *it is to Jesus Christ's glory to give of His saving mercy, and therefore be certain that He will not withhold it.* It cannot make Christ more glorious to deny a poor sinner His mercy. It cannot be to His profit to shut His door in a seeking sinner's face. It is impossible that the bleeding Lamb should cease to be pitiful to poor bleeding hearts. By everything that can make the name of the great Physician glorious, by every pang of His soul on account of sinners, I am persuaded that He will not deny you. Why, the more a physician cures, the greater is his fame; the more the Savior saves, the higher is His honor; the more Jesus Christ can bless, the more lofty will be the praise, and the more exalted that mighty shout of " Hallelujah!" that shall go up from 10,000s times 10,000s of sinners, who have been washed in His blood. Come, then, seeking sinner, come now, and by humble faith trust in the Mediator's sacrifice. Wipe those eyes of yours. Be of good cheer. Be bold in heart. He calls you. There is room at His table. The door is open; there is room in His heart; He died for those who rest in Him. If you wish for Christ, He wishes for you. If you long to go to the feast, He wants guests as much as you want the feast. Only trust Him! God help you to trust Him by His Spirit, and you shall live.

III. The last thing was to be to urge you tonight, before you leave this house of prayer—but my urging will be of no service unless God the Holy Spirit acknowledges it—TO URGE YOU TO PRAY THE PRAYER OF THE TEXT.

A desire is like seed in the bag, but prayer sows it in the furrow. A desire is like water in the bottle, but prayer drinks it. Now I commend to you the prayer of my text—"Sir, give me this water." Begin then, your prayer *by honoring Christ.* Do not call Him, "Sir," but call Him, "Lord." She gave Him the highest title that her respect could accord. She did not know Him in any other capacity, so she called Him "Sir." Now, call Jesus, "Lord," for you will get no mercy if you dishonor Christ. Think of Him as God's only Son suffering for sinners. Call him, "Lord." Can you do that? If you reject His divinity, you shut yourself out of His kingdom. He must be acknowledged as Lord and God as well as Savior. "Oh," you say, "I have long ago called Him Lord, I know Him to be divine; I rejoice in the thought of His eternal power and Godhead; I would honor Him with all that I have." Well, then, you have well begun, but may divine grace make you go further.

Now in the next place, if you would pray this prayer aright, notice it, and *confess your undeservingness.* It is not, "Sir, *sell* me this water," but, "Sir, *give* me this water." Confess that it is a gift. You shall never have it otherwise. Away with your merit-mongering; away with your trusting in your prayers, and your tears, and your sense of need! Mercy must be given or else you shall never have it. "Sir, *give* me, *give* me, *give* me this water. O Lord, give me grace, or else I die; give it to me of Your free mercy, because You have promised to save the chief of sinners; give it to me, Lord. I am done with boasting; I am done with the Pharisee's thanking You that I am not as other men are; I come with empty hands; I come naked, poor, and miserable; give it to me; I have nothing to buy it with. Oh, give it to me without money and without price, Your salvation!" Friend, does your pride kick at this? Be wise, I pray you, and bow your neck to the yoke of divine grace.

Take care, too, that you make it a *personal prayer*—"Lord, give it to *me."* Never mind your neighbors just now. Care for them after you are saved. Look after their salvation when your own is secure; but just now you have first to do with yourself. Your children? Yes, pray for them. Your relatives? Yes, consider them. But, meanwhile, now it is *yourself,* your own proper self that is concerned. Do not think of the whole congregation. Think now personally of your own soul, and say, "Lord, give *me* this water." I mean you, Mary, and you, Thomas, and you, John; let the prayer come from your own lips, as distinctly being from yourself. As you sit or stand now in this house of prayer, silently breathe the petition—"Lord, give Your grace to *me, even me."*—

"Pass me not, O gracious Father,
Sinful though my heart may be;
You might curse me, but the rather
Let Your mercy light on me,
Even me!
Pass me not, O tender Savior!
Let me love and cling to Thee;
I am longing for Your favor;
When You come, call for me,
Even me!"

Once more, I want you to offer this prayer *in the present tense*—not, "Give me this water *tomorrow;*" but, "Tonight give it to me; Lord, save my soul now." The worst of most of men is this: they want to be saved, but it must be when they die. You would serve the devil all your life, and then cheat him of your soul at the last! Mean, miserable thought! If God is God, serve Him, serve Him now; and may the Lord have us in life, as we hope He may have us in our death. "Give me this water." But you are going out next Wednesday; that will be awkward! "Yes," said some young woman at a revival meeting, who was in much concern, "but I am going to a ball tomorrow." And so everything good was put off for that; and she dropped down dead at the ball! God grant there may be no such cases of postponing here, lest we postpone ourselves into eternity, where there are no acts of pardon past. May we have Christ *now*. We may not live to see tomorrow's sun. Albeit that the sun is well-near gone down, yet the light of this evening may not have gone before our life may be ended. How near to death we stand, and yet we scarcely think of it! Right on the edge of our graves sometimes we are, and yet we sport and laugh as though we had a lease on life! You forget death, most of you. The cemetery is so far out of town, but still you should not quite forget, for the hearse goes to and fro with awful regularity, and the church bell that tolls is not rusty, and those words, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes," are still familiar to the ears of some of us.

It will soon be your turn to die. You, too, must gather up your feet in the bed, and meet your father's God; God grant that you may then be found right with Him. Little do I know for whom these sentences may have a special bearing, but they may have a bearing, dear friend, upon you! I see some of you dressed in black; you have had to go to the grave mourning because of others. That black will be worn by others soon for you, and the place that now knows you shall know you no more forever. Oh, by the frailty of life, by the near approach of the Master, or by the certainty of death, I pray you see to it that you breathe the prayer, "Lord give me of Your grace." The Lord help you to pray it. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
REVELATION 7:9-17.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

SEEING JESUS
NO. 771

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

"We see Jesus."
Hebrews 2:9.

THE apostle, in this verse, does not claim to have seen the Lord in the flesh, although he boasts in another passage that he has done so, and asserts it as one of the proofs of his apostleship. He is not, indeed, in this text referring to any seeing of the Lord by mortal eyes at all; he is speaking of faith—he means a spiritual sight of the Lord Jesus Christ. The point to which I shall have to draw your attention this evening is that sight is very frequently used in Scripture as a metaphor, an illustration, a symbol, to set forth what faith is. Faith is the eye of the soul. It is the act of looking unto Jesus. In that act, by which we are saved, we look unto Him and are saved from the very ends of the earth. We look to Him, and we find Salvation.

So far as seeing with these natural eyes of ours is concerned, it is the very opposite of faith. We have heard people speak as though they wished they had lived in the Savior's day, and could have seen Him. It must have been a great privilege to those who were spiritually-minded, but it was no privilege (as they know now, alas, to their regret), to those who were spiritually blind; for many of those who saw our Lord, and heard Him preach, rose up in wrath to thrust Him out of the synagogue, and cast Him down the brow of the hill. Instead of being overawed by His sweet majesty, or won by that love which sat upon His brow, they scoffed at Him, said He was a Samaritan, had a devil, and was mad. Even the sight of Jesus Christ upon the cross did not convert the men who stood there, but they thrust out their tongue, and called Him by ignominious titles, and increased the sorrows of His death by their scornful expressions. To see Jesus Christ with the natural eye is nothing, my brothers and sisters, for this shall be the lot of all men, and they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and shall weep and wail because of Him. The sight of Him, when He shall come in the latter days to judge the earth in righteousness, will be the source of terror to the wicked, so that there can be no kind of benefit, certainly no saving blessing, from such a sight of Jesus Christ with the eyes as will be afforded even to lost spirits.

The apostle is speaking of the spiritual eye here. He is speaking of that mental vision which God affords to those who have had their eyes anointed with heavenly eye salve by the Holy Spirit, that they may see, and our business tonight is, first of all, to show *why faith is so frequently compared to the sense of sight.*

I. Let us, in the first place, give our attention for a few minutes TO THE REASON WHY FAITH IS COMPARED TO SIGHT.

Is not sight, in many respects, the noblest of all the senses? To be deprived of any of our senses is a great loss, but perhaps the greatest deprivation of all is the loss of sight. Certainly, whatever may be the degree of pain that may follow the loss of any other sense, they who lose their sight, lose the noblest of human faculties.

For observe, in the first place, that *sight is marvelously quick.* How wondrously fast and far it travels! It does not take you an hour to make a journey from one part of the country to another by your eyes. You are on a mountain, and you can see 50 or a 100 miles, as the case may be, and you see it by the simple opening of your eyes. It is all there. Your thought is flashed far away in an instant, in the twinkling of your eye. Standing on some of the Alpine summits, you look far and wide, and see lakes spread at a distance beneath your feet, and far away, there is a range of black mountains, or of hills clothed with snow; you know they are perhaps 200 miles distant, but in a moment you are there. So quick does the sense of sight travel, that we go to the moon or to the sun without knowing that any space of time is taken up by our eyes traveling there; and those remote stars which the astronomers tell us are so distant, that they can scarcely compute how far off they are, yet my eyes travel to them in a second of time, when I gaze upon the starry firmament—so quickly does sight travel—and equally rapid is the action of faith. Brothers and sisters, we know not where heaven may be—where the state, the place called "heaven" is, but faith takes us there in contemplation in a single moment. We cannot tell when the Lord may come; it may not be for centuries yet, but faith steps over the distance in a moment, and sees Him coming in the clouds of heaven, and hears the trumpet of resurrection. It would be very difficult, indeed it would be impossible for us to travel backward in any other chariot than that of faith, for it is faith which helps us to see the creation of the world, when the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy!

Faith enables us to walk in the garden with our first parents, and to witness the scene when God promised that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Faith makes us familiar with patriarchs, and gives us to see the troubles and trials of kings. Faith takes us to Calvary's summit, and we stand and see our Savior as plainly as did His mother when she stood sorrowfully at the foot of the cross. We this day can fly back to the solemn day of Pentecost, and feel as if we could hear the mighty rushing wind, and see the cloven tongues sitting upon the chosen company, so swiftly does faith travel. And, best of all, in one moment faith can take a sinner out of a state of death into a state of life, can lift him from damnation into salvation, can remove him from the land of the shadow of death, where he sat in affliction and irons, and give him the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. O sinner, you can get at Christ in a moment of time. No sooner has your heart trusted Jesus, than you are with Him, united to Him! You need not say, "Where is He? I would fly to heaven if I could but find Him, or dive under hell's most profound wave if I could but embrace Him." He is near you, so near that the act of faith conveys you at once into His bosom, plunges you into His blood, clothes you with His right-

eousness, adopts you into the family of God, and makes you co-heir with Jesus Christ, joint-heir with Him in all things. See, then, why faith is like sight, because of the rapidity of its operations, requiring no time; so that a dying sinner, believing in Jesus, is saved at the 11th hour, needing not to go roundabout to do penances, and pass through probationary periods, and I know not what besides. He may come to Jesus, weary, and worn and sad; and the road to Jesus, though it seems long to some, is so short that one step takes you there. You have but to leave self behind, and trust in Him, and you are with Him. "We see Jesus" then. Faith is like sight for its quickness.

Is not faith like sight, too, in the second place, *for its largeness?* It is a wonderful faculty, that of sight. Your eyes and mine, take in at once the whole of this building with all the assembled company. These eyes will next, if they are placed at a point of vantage, take in the entire city of London with the whole of its populous streets. Give the eyes but the opportunity, let the sun go down, and they will take in all the thousands of worlds that stud the brow of night. What is there which the eyes cannot grasp, and mark you, not the eyes of the great and mighty only, but of the poorest also? Yes, the little insignificant eyes of the lark can take in as much, no doubt, as the big eyes of the bull; and the smallest eyes that God creates, He enables to compass great things. A marvelous thing is that eye, darting its shafts everywhere, sending its rays around and embracing all things. Now, just such a power is faith. What a faculty faith has for grasping everything, for it lays hold upon the past, the present, and the future. It pierces through most intricate things, and sees God producing good out of all the tortuous circumstances of providence. And what is more, faith does what the eyes cannot do—it sees the infinite; it beholds the invisible; it looks upon that which eye has not seen and which ear has not heard; it sees beneath the veil that parts us from the land of terror, and, moved with fear, it makes us fly to the Savior. Faith sees through the pearly gate, and, beholding the glory of the better land, it makes us fly to Jesus, who bears the keys of paradise at His belt. Faith sees—I know not how to describe fully what faith sees. What is there she does not behold? She sees even God Himself; for though in my finite conception I cannot grasp God, and my understanding can only perceive, as it were, His train and skirts, yet my faith, with awful comprehension, can take in the whole of God, and believe what she does not know, and accept what she cannot comprehend. Oh, wondrous faculty of faith! God give it to you, my dear Hearer. God give you more and more of it, that it may be to you the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, and that all comprehending faculty shall enable you to say—

"All things are mine, the gift of God,
The purchase of a Savior's blood;
This world is mine, and worlds to come.
Earth is my lodge, and heaven my home."

Again, sight is a most remarkable faculty, *because, in the judgment of most men, it is very sure.* We believe that we are often deceived by hearing. We are inclined often, when we hear a story, to say, "I could believe that if I saw it, but I could not otherwise; I have been so often deceived

by hearing tales, that I cannot always credit what my ears tell me." We know how, by feelings, we are readily enough deceived, like Isaac, who would not have given his blessing to Jacob had not his eyes waxed dim, and his touch deceived him. But "seeing is believing"; according to the world's proverb. When a man sees a thing, then he says he knows it; though, indeed, of late years especially, we have learned that even sight itself is not always to be trusted, for the most extraordinary illusions have been practiced upon persons for amusement, and have become a part of the apparatus of pleasure and philosophy. You cannot believe your own eyes nowadays. You see a great many things, or think you see them, which are not there, and things which you could declare to be in such-and-such a position turn out not to be there at all; it is merely some reflection, or some delusion, simple enough when explained, but most puzzling until it is opened up to you. However, sight is generally regarded by men to be the most sure of all our faculties. If we see a thing, there it is, there is no questioning it. Now, faith has this certifying power in a much higher degree, for the faith which is of the operation of God and which distinguishes His own elect, is infallible. The faith of God's people will not believe a lie. It is written that "if it were possible," such-and-such "would deceive the very elect," but it is not possible. Where faith takes the word of God as her basis, and rests upon it, she becomes an infallible faculty, and we may depend upon that which she reveals to us. It is a glorious thing to know certainties, such as the existence of God, and the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; such blessed certainties as the effectual atonement which has put away the sin of the Lord's people; and such certainties as the enjoyment of the presence of the Holy Spirit in His indwelling power within our soul. May we have much of this faith which is like sight for its certifying power.

Once more, is not faith wondrously like sight, *from its power to affect the mind, and enable a man to realize a thing?* What I mean is this. That eminent preacher in America, Mr. Beecher, frequently used to address his audience upon slavery, and his touching eloquence never failed to move his people to an abhorrence of the thing, and to sympathy with those who smarted under its power. But on one occasion, as I have been told, he wished to produce an extraordinary feeling in order to raise a large sum of money for a certain purpose. He therefore spoke enthusiastically upon the sorrows of a beautiful girl, almost white, but still with sufficient African blood in her veins for her master to claim her for his slave, and she was about to be sold far south for the worst of purposes. Mr. Beecher wanted to touch the hearts of his people to purchase her liberty, that she, their sister in Christ, might be freed. He had spoken earnestly, but to produce the required effect he called her from her seat, and bade her stand up in the midst, and you may guess that that morning there was no difficulty in collecting all the needed funds to set her free. The sight of the slave-girl had moved their hearts as the preacher's words could not do. Now, it is usually so. We talk about poverty, but when do you feel your hands go into your pockets so freely as when you have been visiting a poor family where the little ones are crying for bread, and where the parents have no means for providing for them? You feel

for orphans. Many of us do very sincerely, but we never felt for them so thoroughly as when we began to deal with them, and to see them and their widowed mothers. In our newly-founded Orphanage—for which I would ask your help continually—we have already had to deal with many fatherless ones, and we have come more than ever into contact with them, and we feel that the fatherless are indeed objects of pity, for the sight of them, and of the widows has put the thing forcibly before us.

We have heard of one who, being cold in the streets, and seeing a poor shivering family, thought that winter was very hard, and that when he got home he would take care to put by some money to buy blankets for them; but when he had sat down by the fire, and thoroughly warmed himself, and partaken of his cheerful meal, he thought the weather would change, and that it was not so bad a thing, after all, to have a little winter; and so the blankets were never bought, and the poor were never cared for. There is nothing like sight, my brothers and sisters, to convince, notwithstanding the moment when sight is over, feelings may depart. Now, faith has also this mighty reasoning power in even a higher degree. If it is real faith, it makes the Christian in dealing with God feel towards God as though he saw Him; it gives him the same awe, and yet the same joyous confidence which he would have if he were capable of actually beholding the Lord. Faith, when it takes a stand at the foot of the cross, makes us hate sin and love the Savior just as much as though we had seen our sins placed to Christ's account, and had seen the nails driven through His hands and feet, and seen the bloody scourges as they made the sacred drops of blood fall—

"We were not with the faithful few
Who stood Your bitter cross around;
Nor heard Your prayer for those who slew,
Nor felt that earthquake rock the ground;
We saw no spear pierce Your side—
Yet we can feel that You have died."

Faith realizes the thing, and thus becomes "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"; hence the glory and the beauty of faith. Now, many of you have heard about the wrath of God, but it has all been forgotten. You have heard about the judgment and the wrath of God to come afterwards. You have heard of the atonement, and the power of Jesus to put away sin; but you have had no effect produced upon your minds, because, as the apostle puts it, "It was not mixed with faith in them who heard it." But if you had had faith in that which was proclaimed, and had come savingly to trust in the truth of God which was presented as the grounds of your salvation, you would have been moved, and stirred, and excited, and led to hate sin and to fly to Jesus. God grant to us, then, that we may have more and more faith.

I have thus, I trust, at sufficient length shown the parallel between faith and sight.

II. And now we shall spend a minute or two upon another thought, namely, that FAITH, THE SIGHT OF THE SOUL, IS HERE SPOKEN OF AS A CONTINUOUS THING.

"We see Jesus." It does not say, "We can see Jesus"—that is true enough: the spiritual eye can see the Savior; nor does it say, "We have

seen Him;" that also, glory be to God, is a delightful fact, we have seen the Lord, and we have rejoiced in seeing Him; nor does the text say, "We shall see Him," though this is our pride and our hope, that "when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is;" but the text says, "We see Jesus;" We *do* see Him now and continually. This is the common habit of the Christian: it is the element of his spiritual life; it is his most delightful occupation; it is his constant practice. "We see Jesus."

Dear brothers and sisters, I am afraid some of us forget this. For instance, *we see Jesus Christ as our Savior, we being sinners still.* And is it not a delightful thing always to feel one's self a sinner, and always to stand looking to Christ as one's Savior, thus beholding Him evermore? "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, even so walk you in Him." Not merely sometimes coming to Him as you came at first, but evermore abiding in Him; "to whom coming"—always coming, constantly coming—"as unto a living stone." I was present at a meeting of believers a short time ago, when a conversation of this kind occurred. A brother in the Lord, one of the most fervent men I know, said that sometimes when his piety flagged, and his heart grew cold, he found it a very blessed thing to go and visit the sick and the dying; and he found this to be such a sweet restoration to his faith that he recommended us all, as often as we could, to frequent dying beds. Now, another brother who was present, who preaches the gospel, but who at the same time is a butcher, said he thanked God he did not need to go to a dying bed to see Jesus, and to get his heart set right; that he had had as sweet fellowship with God in Camden Town Market, as he ever had in the house of prayer, and that he found it best always to live, as his brother wished to live sometimes, namely, always conscious of sin, and always looking to the sin-offering. Come to Jesus, then, as you came at first. Fly to the fountain always as needing constant cleansing—not as though you had not been washed, but still abiding, continuing in blessed recognition of your present cleansing that flows from the fountain filled with blood. It is very sweet to remember that the fountain we sing about as being opened in Jerusalem is opened "for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem"—not so much for sinners, though it is opened for them, as for believers—"for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Let us always be coming to it; and each morning and each night, let this be the cry of our spirit, "Still guilty, still vile, still polluted, we see Jesus, and, seeing Him, we know that we are saved."

Should not this, also, be the mode of our life in another respect? *We are now disciples.* Being saved from our former conversation, we have now become the disciples of the Lord Jesus; and ought we not, as disciples, to be constantly with our Master? Ought not this to be the motto of our life, "We see Jesus"? We should not regard the commands of Jesus Christ as being a law left to us by a departed Master whom we cannot see, and to whom we cannot fly. Is it not better to believe that Christ is a living Christ, that He is in the midst of His church still, observing our order, noting our obedience or our disobedience, a Master absent in one sense, but still in another point of view ever present, according to His

promise—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"? We should—

"Stay with Him near the tree,
Stay with Him near the tomb;
Stay till the risen Lord we see,
Stay watching 'till He come."

My brothers and sisters, should we be so frequently cold and careless if we could always see Jesus? Would our hearts be so hard towards perishing sinners if we always saw that face which was wet with tears for them? Do you think we could sit still, or grow worldly, or spend all our energies upon ourselves, if we could see the crucified, who though "He saved others, Himself He could not save"? I wish I could always come here to preach Jesus "seeing" Him by my side, and feeling in my heart that I was preaching in my Master's presence. I would that you could always come into this place, both at prayer meetings and at all other times, feeling, "The Master is here; let us bow as in His sight; let our worship be given—not to one who is blind, and who will not see us, but to one who beholds us all, and sees our inmost thoughts." As disciples we should be more punctual in our obedience, more consistent in our imitation of Jesus, if we had Him always before us. The Catholics puts up the crucifix idol before their eyes; well, let us put up Christ in our spirits. He wears the cross idol around his neck: let us carry Christ in our heart, still thinking of Jesus, seeing Him at all times.

Would it not also, dear friends, be very much for our comfort if *we were to see Jesus always as our friend in our sojourn here?* "Henceforth," He says, "I call you not servants, but I have called you friends." You are very poor, my dear brother; do you see Jesus? He was poorer than you. You have somewhere to go to sleep tonight, but He could say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." Are you racked with pain tonight? Let it help you to see Jesus. You are not "exceedingly sorrowful even unto death," nor are your griefs to be compared with His. Have you been deserted and betrayed? See Jesus kissed by Judas! Have you been denied by some friend who promised to be faithful? Look into the face of Jesus as He turns to Peter! Does death itself stare you in the face? Remember Him who, "being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." We would never be alone if we could see Jesus; or at least, if we were, it would be a blessed solitude. We would never feel deserted if we could see Jesus; we would have the best of helpers. I know we would not feel weak if we always saw Him, for He would be our strength and our song, He would become our salvation. The bitter waters of Marah, the afflictions and troubles of the day, would all be sweet if this tree were cast into the flood for us, and if Jesus were brought, in solemn meditation, into contact with our spirits. Oh, to see Jesus! You have seen Him as your Savior—you desire to see Him as your Master. Oh, to see Him as your friend, upon whose bosom you can still lean your aching head, into whose ear you can always pour out your tale of sorrow. Through the wilderness you may continually come up leaning on your Beloved, and with Him you may have perpetual-

ly such sweet enjoyments, that earth, desert as it is, shall seem to blossom like a garden of roses, and your spirit shall enjoy heaven below.

Again, would it not be much better for us, dear friends, if we were to see Jesus *as our Forerunner?* I do not know whether it is so with the most of you, but while some of us rejoice in the prospect of heaven, yet the thought of death is sometimes surrounded with much gloom. It cannot be an easy thing to go down amidst the chill darkness of the river, and there to be separated, the soul from the body, and to leave this earthly tabernacle behind an inheritance to *worms*. It has a hideous appearance to us sometimes. Even the apostle himself shuddered a little at it when he said, "Not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon." death seems a bitter pill to us all; and unless it is swallowed up in victory, and the victory takes away the sting of death, the hour of dissolution will be bitter. But do you not think that our thoughts of gloom about death sometimes arise from a forgetfulness that Jesus will be with us? If our faith could see Jesus as making our bed in our sickness, and then standing by our side in the last solemn article, to conduct us safely through the iron gates, would we not then look upon death in a very different light? You know how Watts's hymn puts it—

"Oh if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she passed.
Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

My dear brothers and sisters, gathering up all I should like to have said, but cannot say, into one, it is this—if we see Jesus as being always with us, from morn till eve, in life and in death, *what noble Christians it will make us!* Now we shall not get angry with each other so quickly. We shall see Jesus; and we cannot be angry when that dear loving face is in view. And when we have been offended, we shall be very ready to forgive when we see Jesus. Who can hate his brother when he sees that face, that tender face, more marred than that of any man? When we see Jesus, do you think we shall get worldly? Oh, for that consciousness of the eyes of Jesus which are like the hands of Jesus molding us according to His will. "We see Jesus." Would you have spoken as you did across the counter today, brother, sister, had you seen Jesus? My dear friend, would you have been as you have been to your work-fellow? Would you have spoken as you did to your employees? Would you have acted as you did to your employer had you seen Jesus? They say "a master's eye does much;" certainly the presence of Jesus would do much. "The master's eye does more than both his hands," they say. Oh, for that consciousness of the eyes of Jesus which are like the hands of Jesus molding us according to His will. "We see Jesus."

Now, I hope you see Jesus as you sit in the pews there. Sometimes on Sunday, when the Lord helps the preacher, and Christ is evidently set forth among you, you have seen Jesus; but will you see Him after you have gone down those steps? Will you see Him when you get home to

your houses? Will you see Him the next morning in the workroom, or at the business, or in the market? This is not quite as easy, and yet I hold that, if we had more divine grace, we would see Christ just as well in the market, among the baskets of fruit, as we can at the Tabernacle sitting in our pews. We would see Him quite as well if we were driving a horse, or walking along Cheapside, as when we are in our closets, bowing the knee; for that is true grace which is with us always, and that is the presence of Jesus which abides with us forever, and that is true piety which shines the fairest in the midst of worldly cares. May we each one of us have this, and may it be the expression of our life—"We see Jesus;" and then we shall be able to go farther and say, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

III. I shall detain you just a minute or two longer, for a third point about our sight of Jesus, namely: we have said that faith is like sight, and that our faith should be a present grace in active operation; but there may be this reflection about our present sight of Christ, that SOMETIMES OUR FAITH, LIKE OUR SIGHT, IS NOT QUITE CLEAR.

You do not always see, I suppose, equally well. There are many things that affect the optic nerves, and we know that in fair weather we can see a greater distance than we can in cloudy weather. I was at Newcastle, some time ago, in a friend's house, and when I went up to the top window and looked out, he said, "There is a fine view, sir, if you could but see it; we can see Durham Cathedral from here on Sunday." "On a Sunday!" I said, "How is that?" "Well, you see all that smoke down there, all those furnaces, and so on; they are all stopped on a Sunday, and then, when the air is clear, we can see Durham Cathedral." Right away I thought—ah, we can see a great deal on a Sunday, when the smoke of the world is gone for a little time; we can see all the way to heaven then; but sometimes, what with the smoke we make in business, and the smoke the devil makes, and the smoke that sin makes, we can scarcely see anything at all. Well, since the natural sight has to undergo variations, both from itself within, and from the smoke without, and from the state of the weather, we must not wonder if our faith undergoes variations too! It ought not to do so, but sometimes it does. There are seasons when we realize that Christ is ours. Glory be to His name, if all the devils in hell would speak to the contrary, yet we know that our Beloved is ours, and that we are His. We are sure of it. Though all the angels in heaven should come and deny it, we would face them, and say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." But there are other times when the same believer sings Newton's hymn, but whenever he does, he ought to sing it alone, for fear anybody should catch the contagion of it—

"'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?"

There are hours when some of us would be glad to creep into a mouse hole or hide ourselves in a nutshell. We feel so little, so insignificant. Our faith is at so miserable an ebb that we know not what to do. Well, let us

not be astonished as though we were not the children of God, because of this. Everything that has life has variations. A block of wood is not affected by the weather, but a living man is. You may drive a stake into the ground, and it will feel no influence of spring, summer, autumn, or winter; but if the stake is alive, and you drive it into the soil where there is moisture, it will soon begin to sprout, and you will be able to tell when spring and winter are coming by the changes that take place in the living tree. Life is full of these changes; do not wonder, then, if you experience them.

Again, faith, like sight, is not only subject to variations, but *it has great growth.* Our children, in a certain sense, see as truly when they are a day old as when they are grown up to be 20 years old; but we must not suppose that they see as accurately, for they do not. I think observations would teach us that little children see all things as on a level surface, and that distant objects seem to them to be near, for they have not yet received experience enough to judge of the relative position of things. That is an acquired knowledge, and no doubt very early acquired, but still it is learned as a matter of mental experience. And let me say, though you may not have noticed it, all our measures of distance by the eye are matters which have to be gained by habit and observation. When I first went to Switzerland, with a friend from Lucerne we saw a mountain in the distance which we were going to climb. I pointed out a place where we should stop half-way up, and I said, "We shall be there in about four and a half hours." "Four and a half hours!" my friend said, "I'd undertake to walk it in ten minutes." "No, not you." "Well, but half an hour!" He looked again, and said, "Anybody could get there in half an hour!" It seemed no distance at all, and yet when we came to toil up, the four and a half hours turned into five or six before we reached the place. Our eyes were not accustomed to mountains, and we were not able to measure them; and it is only by considerable experience that you get to understand what a mountain is, and how a long distance appears. You are altogether deceived, and do not know the position of things till you become wiser. And it is just so with faith. Faith in the Christian, when he first gets it, is true and saving; but it is not in proportion. The man believes one doctrine, perhaps, and that is so delightful that it swallows up every other. Then he gets hold of another, and he swings that way like a pendulum; no doctrine can be true but that one. Perhaps in a little time he swings back like a pendulum the other way. He is unsteady because, while his faith perceives the truth of God, it does not perceive the harmonies of the truths of God—his faith, for instance, may perceive the Lord Jesus Christ, but as yet it has not learned the position which Christ occupies in the great economy of divine grace. He is half-blind, and cannot see very far. He has sight, but it is not the sight which he will yet receive. Like the blind man who, when our Lord healed him, saw men at first as trees walking. He came in due time to see clearly, for grace always goes on in its work—it will never halt half-way; but at first all was obscure and confused. Just as when you pass from darkness into light, you are unable to bear it, you are dazzled, and need a short time to accustom your eyes to the brilliance; but in due time the eyes are strength-

ened, and you can bear more and more light, till you again see with comfort. Let us ask, then, of the Lord, that He will increase our faith till the mental eyes shall become clear and bright, and that we be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, to be with Christ, and to see Him as He is. If you have but little faith, remember that that will save you. The little diamond is as much a diamond as the Kohinoor, and so, little faith is as truly the faith of God's elect as the greatest faith. If you but see Jesus, though it is but by the corner of your eye, yet if you see Him, you shall be saved; and though you may not see as much of Christ as advanced believers do, yet if you see enough of Him to trust Him, to rely on Him entirely, your sins, which are many, are forgiven, and you shall yet receive grace for grace until you shall see Him in His glory. However, always be praying, "Lord, increase our faith."

The last thing I have to notice about this true faith in Christ as sight, is, *that it is at all times a very simple thing to look.* Look! No one needs go to a grammar school or to a university to look. Look! The smallest child, as we have said, can look; the most illiterate and untaught can look. If there is life in a look, glory be to God for such a provision, because it is available for each one of us! Sinner, if you would be saved, there is nothing for you to think upon but Christ. Do your sins trouble you? Go to Him, and trust in Him, and the moment you look to Him you are saved. "Oh," says one, "but I cannot do that; my faith is so weak." Well, when I walk about and see a beautiful sight, very seldom do I think about my own sight; my mind is occupied with the sight, and so let it be with you. Never mind those eyes—think more about the vision to be seen. Think of Christ. It would be a pitiful thing if, when there were some great procession in the streets, all you thought about was your own eyes; you would see but very little. Think less about your *faith*, and more about *Jesus*—

"Weary sinner! Keep your eyes
On the atoning sacrifice.
View Him bleeding on the tree,
Pouring out His life for thee.
Cast your guilty soul on Him,
Find Him mighty to redeem;
At His feet your burden lay;
Look your doubts and fears away."

Turn over and over in your mind the great transaction on the cross. I have sometimes said to young seekers, Go home and spend an hour deliberately reading about the death of Christ, and then picture it in your mind's eye, for it is in that way that faith comes. Through the Holy Spirit's power, we come to believe that story by thinking upon it, seeing Jesus in it, and then following on, and giving it the full acceptance of our spirit. Go to the cross for faith if you cannot go with faith, and the Lord grant that you may find in Jesus—

"True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us near,"

so that you, too, may say with us, "We see Jesus."

What is there in this world which is worth looking at in comparison with Him? All else is like the mirage of the desert which appears but to fade away, deluding the weary traveler with hopes of rest and refresh-

ment, and leaving him sick at heart, because all has passed as the baseless fabric of a dream. Can you gain anything by watching the bubbles on the stream of time? Will they shake your death thirst and cool your brow in the article of death? Is there anything of healing in the uplifted images of earthly gold, honor, wisdom, and power? You have tried them—well, how do they answer? I know of one who, traveling over a pass in Italy, one evening, secured a light to help him over a dangerous and difficult part of the way further on. It was not needed till the narrow steep descent was reached, in fact, it was in the way till then, and just as the traveler came to the very spot where it was required, it went out and left him in utter darkness. So it is full often in the sinner's experience who travels in the dark, his lights go out when most needed. Oh, far better then to walk in daylight, using the eye of faith, in the clear sunshine of gospel Light from the Sun of Righteousness! Walk in the light of God. Come to the light, and live seeing Jesus—

"'We would see Jesus,' for the shadows lengthen
Across this little landscape of our life;
'We would see Jesus,' our weak faith to strengthen,
For the last weariness, the final strife.
'We would see Jesus,' the great rock foundation,
Whereon our feet were set by sovereign grace;
Nor life nor death, with all their agitation,
Can then remove us if we see His face.
'We would see Jesus'—sense is all too blinding,
And heaven appears too dim, too far away;
We would see You, to gain a sweet reminding
That You have promised our great debt to pay.
'We would see Jesus': this is all we're needing—
Strength, joy, and willingness, come with the sight;
'We would see Jesus'; dying, risen, pleading;
Then welcome day, and farewell mortal night!"

The Lord send you away with His blessing, for Jesus' sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HEBREWS 2

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

DELAY IS DANGEROUS
NO. 772

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

"And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at least ten; after that she shall go."
Genesis 24:55.

YOU know the story of which these words form a part. Abraham was anxious to secure a wife for his son, Isaac. He sends, therefore, his well-tried servant to the land of their forefathers, and takes an oath of him that he will bring a maiden from there, who would be, by her birth and character, suitable to her future destiny. The venerable servant departs on his delicate and difficult errand. He took all precautions, and then commended his case to the wise disposal of his own and his master's God. Success, which was in perfect harmony with his faith, and with the divine promises, at once crowned his efforts. The maiden best adapted above all others to be the spouse of Isaac is sent to meet him. She immediately responded to his wishes, and conducted him to the house of her brother. The aged man was wise in his generation, and knew that a key of gold has the power to open the heart most tightly locked either by prejudice or pride—everything gives way before its subtle influence. He had calculated wisely, and his plans are matured at once into all he had fervently desired and prayed for. No sooner had Abraham's servant exhibited his offerings—jewels of silver and gold, with earrings and bracelets of precious metal, than he at once won the consent of Laban, Rebekah's brother, and of her mother; for what would not Laban have agreed to do for the sake of such valuable things? The good servant, therefore, when he went to his bed that night, might well have slept soundly, congratulating himself that he had found in his anxious mission an easy task, that he should be able to go back the next morning to his master, taking Rebekah with him, and that the whole matter would be carried through with surprising speed. Judge of his surprise, when, the first thing Laban said in answer to the good man's request, "Send me away," was, "Oh no! We cannot afford to let you go just yet; we must have the damsel here a little while longer, 10 days at least." I do not know what may have been Laban's particular reason, but I suspect his motives were in keeping with his character. If you observe his subsequent conduct

with regard to Jacob, you may rest assured that there was something in the background. He thought, perhaps, that there were more golden bracelets to be had, that he was parting with his sister rather too cheaply, that he must not let the priceless gems go out of his hands too soon, therefore he would keep the account open, and bargain some more; or, if he could not get more out of the servant, he might at least get 10 days more service from the maiden, for she appears to have been the keeper of the sheep of the household, and to have performed the usual menial duties attended to by the young women of the family in the East. So Laban may have thought he might as well have her for 10 days longer. It was just like he; he would have as much as he ought to have, and as much more as he could get; that was his honesty. He would get all that it was possible to squeeze out of everybody; that was his generosity.

We shall not, however, have anything more to do with Laban tonight, than to use his desire to retain his good sister Rebekah as an illustration of the way in which this wicked world endeavors to meet the invitations of the gospel, by trying to retain the awakened sinner a little longer in its grasp. I believe there are many here who have a hope that one day or other they will be saved. They have consented, in their judgment, that it is a right thing to be converted, but not yet. The world says, "Yes, these are weighty considerations; you shall go with that man; you shall have Christ; you shall put your trust in Him; but not yet; put it off for just a little while." Satan's last counsel to his servants seems to have been, "Do not openly oppose the gospel; give way to it, but suggest delay; do not set men's consciences in opposition to gospel truth, for that is a hammer, and perhaps it will break their rocky hearts to pieces; but tell them to yield to the hammer; tell them to say, 'Yes, yes, it is all true, quite correct; but we must wait a little longer, at least ten days; there is plenty of time; there is no need to hurry; let the damsel wait a little while, ten days at least.' "

I. I want to draw your attention, first of all, to THE WORLD'S STRATEGIES FOR THIS DELAY.

I stand knocking tonight at the world's door, and I say, "There is a young heart here I want for Christ;" The world replies, "All right, you shall have it one of these days, but there is time enough, yet." I say of another, "Here is a man whose strength and vigor I want for the Savior." "All right," says the world, "do not be in such a fever about it; we are all agreed with you; we all think as you do, that religion is important, but wait awhile, put it off, take your time, tarry a little; there is no cause for all this hurry and this fuss." If I ask the world what it means by talking like this, it says, "Well, you see, *some of these people are so young;* it is

too soon for them to think of giving their hearts to Christ—would you have all the boys and girls turn saints? Would you have all the young men and women walking in the ways of Christ, and following in the footsteps of the crucified?" I answer, "Yes, indeed, I would;" but I wonder at the world's impudence in putting such a question as this concerning some of you, for some of you are not young. You have passed the period of youth years ago, and yet you are unconverted; and if I might hold parley with the world about some of the youngsters, I cannot about you. Why, surely, the world cannot have the gall to tell me that you who are 30, 40, 50, or even 60 years of age, are still too young! I would not wonder, indeed, but that it turns around and tells me that you are too old, and that your time of mercy is past, and that I am too late. At any rate, Satan often does play both tunes, and while today he says, "Too soon," tomorrow he cries, "Too late." Too young to be saved! Is anyone too young to be happy? Too young to be a Christian! Is anyone too young to get the richest treasure that can make human hearts glad? I tell you honestly, that if I knew I had to die like a dog, that that would be the end of me, and that there were no hereafter bliss for the people of God, I would prefer then, even for the happiness of this life, merely to have Christ in my heart, to have the possession of His love; for there is nothing that can make the step so light, nor the eyes so sparkling, nor the heart so cheerful, as a clear conscience! And where can a clear conscience be found but in those who have washed in the Fountain of the atoning blood, and thus are made clean? O young people do not let the lying world tell you that you are too young! When our Lord was on earth, He said, "Let the little ones come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Do not believe that it is too soon for Christ to welcome you. Your need of Him begins with your life, for you are born in sin, and shaped in iniquity; as soon as ever you begin to act, you begin to sin in acting. Your first tendency is to fall as soon as ever you are on your feet. It is never too soon to have the strong arm of a Savior put around you to hold you up, that you may be safe. What? Is it too early in the lamb's life to be carried in the shepherd's arms? Why, its very youth and consequent weakness form the reason why it needs him at once above all others. O that the very babies knew Christ, and that boys and girls learned to lisp His name, their little hearts going with their lisping! They cannot, surely, be too young.

Then the world says, "O wait a little longer; *we should like these young people to know something about life."* Well, but, base world, what do you mean by that? What have you to do with life? *We*, too, want the young people to know something about life—but what is life? Why, true life is to

be found only in the followers of Christ, in whom is life! "Well," says the world, "but we mean the life _____." I know what you mean; you mean *the death.* You want the young people to know something about life, you say. I hear you; it is the voice of the same hissing serpent that said, "You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And our mother Eve, in order to know evil as well as to know good has destroyed this race. And many a young man and young woman in trying to know good and to know evil, has come to know that which has made the head to ache, and the heart to palpitate, and the nerves to tingle with exquisite pain, that pain which has brought the frail body to an early grave, and the doomed soul down to the lowest hell! I pray God that our young people may not know life in that aspect, but that they may know life in the true sense, and search for it where only it is to be found—

"There is life for a look at the crucified One,
There is life at this moment for you."

If you want the best, the highest kind of manhood's life, come and give your heart to my Master, Jesus Christ compelled to do so by His Spirit.

"Ah, then," says the world, putting on its best smiles, "it is all very well for you to talk, *but we do not want our young people to give up all their pleasure."* And what have you to do with pleasure, you painted Jezebel? What have you to do with happiness, false deluder of souls? The world—this canting, hypocritical world, dares to utter and dwell upon that word "pleasure," but it does not know what it means—ask those who have tried its joys, its princely minds, such as Byron, who, like an angel, flew through the hell of this world's pleasures. Ask them what they have made of it all, and their only answer is in a groan, and with a sigh, deeply heaving from their inmost spirits, they join in modern times with the verdict of the ancient royal philosopher, who said, "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity!" Pleasure, indeed! Happiness, indeed! You base world, what do you know about it?

"Solid joy and lasting pleasure,
None but Zion's children know."

It is because we would have these people possessed of pleasure that we wish them to be converted, and that we desire to see them joined to Christ. It is false, as false as God is true, that religion makes men miserable. Spurious religion may do so. They who worship Moloch may adore him with shrieks and cries, but the worshipers of Jehovah bow before their God with gladness; they come into His presence with thanksgiving, and into His courts with joy. The richest joy, the noblest festivities, the most enchanting mirth that hearts can know, is that which we find at our Father's throne when we adoringly worship Him, and do Him active service. When the prodigal came trembling back from the far-off land to

his father's house, his misery ceased, and his joy began as soon as his father had spoken. What bliss must have thrilled him with the word of his gracious parent's lips! The best robe! The precious ring! The costly shoes! The fatted calf! All for me? Why, it seems too good to be true. But so it is to be, and not only in his case, but with us all. "Religion's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Our cup has joy's quintessence distilled into it, and it is filled to the brim. "That your joy may be full," said the Master; and it is full, as full as God's eternal love, as Christ's most precious grace, and the Spirit's blest communion can make it; yes, as full as heaven and eternal bliss can fill it. Heaped up, running over, it is measured to us from our Lord; so that we can say—

"I would not change my lest estate
For all that earth calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

Now, I wonder what else the world has to say by way of wishing to keep these people a few more days? Oh, yes! Oh, yes; I know it brings out the ledger, and puts the pen behind its ear, and it says, *"A young man ought to mind the main chance,* he should get on in business, and then when he has made a competence, he may sit down and think about the world to come; but his first objective should be to make money." Yes, my good sir, and if you would but speak the whole of your mind, you would say that he ought in the last place to make money too. I knew your father well. He began life as you would have these young people begin, and he plodded on, and plodded on to the end of his allotted term, never having had time to think about religion. He was such a rare sensible old gentleman, such a wise man! "What I want, are facts and figures," he said, "none of your nonsense; do not tell me about your opinions; I cast my books up on Sunday—that is the way to spend your Sunday. I dare say when I have nothing else to do, I shall have time to think about my soul." He was a rare "fine old English gentleman," a very wise old man; but one night he lifted up his eyes in hell, and with all his accurate bookkeeping and balance of accounts, he had to sum it up—"No profits; I have gained my wealth, but lost my soul!" And oh, if he could come back again, he would say to his son, "My son, you had better begin business at the right end; make the soul sure first, and then look after the body; hook yourself fast to eternity, and make that right, and then see after the slippery things of time as best you can in subservience to that." At any rate, let Mr. Worldly-Wiseman say what he may, that God, who knows more about us than we do about ourselves, says, "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." So, false world, farewell, go your way, and set your traps every-

where, for we do not believe that is a good thing for awakened hearts to wait until it shall be too late. These are some of the strategies under which this delay is desired on the part of the world.

II. Shall I tell you now WHAT IS THE DRIFT OF ALL THIS WAITING?

Ten days did not seem too long; but they might have been ten days too late. One day does not seem much; but one day more may be one day too late, and one day too late is to be too late forever; yes, one minute too late is an eternity too late! Remember that, if you have missed Christ by but one tick of the clock, you have missed Christ forever; so that minutes and ticks of clocks may be invested with a solemn power, if we come to look at them in that light.

But what the world means is just this, "Ah," says Madam Bubble, "here is a young person impressed—if we laugh at him it will deepen the impression; but we will say to him, 'Come, come, let the impression go for a little while; this is not the fit time; when you have a more convenient season you can bring it up again.'" This game the old tempter keeps on playing over and over again. He does it very blandly; he does not oppose religion, but "everything in its proper place," he says, "and this is just not the time for it; wait a little longer." He said this to some of you 10 years ago, and he is saying the same to you tonight, and if you live, he will say the same 10 years from now; and again when you are on your dying bed; and so with this cunning he will cheat you out of your soul. The world says, again, to itself, "Every time we get this impression put off, we get the conscience more unlikely to receive it again, for no man cripples his conscience without suffering injury." If I say to my awakened conscience, "No, I will not hear you," my ears get less retentive of the sound, and Mr. Conscience himself grows less able to speak. When the knocking at the door has been heard for a long time and not answered, a man gets to be so in the habit of hearing the alarm that he could go to sleep and let a man knock all night. I have heard that the men who make the big boilers in Southwark, when they are first put inside the boiler, are nearly stunned by the horrible noise made by those who are hammering on the outside, but after a while they get so used to the sound that they can almost go to sleep, and let the men hammer away as long as they please.

Moreover, the world says, "Well, if they do go at last, yet *we will exact from them as long a time of service as we can.* Suppose they do leave us and engage in the service of Christ, yet we shall have had their help in the work of the devil for a good long time, and they will be poor old lame things when they go limping into Christ's service, and they will not be good for much then." The devil knows that Christ loves the young, and

therefore he tries to keep the young from going to Him. "No," Satan says, "if He will have that flower, I will not let Him have it in the bud if I can help it; He shall have it when it gets full blown, and much of its beauty has gone from it; I will keep it with me while in its prime as long as I can. "Yes, and there is this thing in addition, that while I have it in my power, I can do that to it which it can never get rid of in this life—I will lead it into sins that shall cleave to its memory; I will teach that young man vile songs that shall someday come up in his mind when he begins to pray; I will show him scenes that shall stagger him when he grows old, and make him cry as though his very bones were broken." "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my former transgressions." "Ah!" says Satan, "If I lose him yet I shall have spoiled him from ever becoming an eminent Christian, and through him I shall have done the King of heaven as much damage as may be." That is what the devil says; he wants to have you altogether, or if he cannot do that, he would have you wait a little while. O may God's eternal mercy come to your rescue, and may you be saved from Satan without waiting the 10 days; may your hearts be brought to Jesus now! And how sad the thought, that Satan is getting service out of some who will have to spend much of their afterlife in trying to undo what they have, in their blindness, been led to perform for the god of this world! What a waste of time and talent, to build up in misery today what you will wish, for very shame, to pull down tomorrow! Some men have written books, or done deeds in early life which will meet them as long as they live, confronting them in the path of service, and proving to be their direst foes. It will be a source of ever recurring grief to find yourself wounded by an arrow feathered thus out of your own wing—to feel yourself crushed by stones your own hands set a rolling in days gone by. And the false light you hung out years back will serve to wreck souls even when you yourself, safe over life's seas, shall be at rest in your desired haven. If heaven could find room for a single sorrow, it should have, I think, some connections with the thought that we have thus helped to ruin souls. Sow no more tares! Come to Jesus, even now!

III. Thirdly, having exposed the strategies of the world, and tried to show its cruel designs, OUR REAL OBJECTIVE IS TO HAVE OUR HEARERS SAVED, AND TO HAVE THEM SAVED NOW.

I never did come upon this platform desiring that my ministry might be blessed to you months after you had heard the sermon; but I trust I have prayed times without number that it might be blessed at once to the salvation of souls. It is an immediate result that we must look for and labor to achieve.

There were three reasons why Abraham's servant wished Rebekah to go with him at once, and these move me to desire your conversion tonight.

First, *he desired it for his Master's sake.* He knew that Isaac was looking forward to the happy day when he would be married to his chosen bride. And oh, the heart of Jesus is longing after sinners! It is a happy day for the Savior when He welcomes the lost ones. It is one of Christ's wedding days when He gets a soul to come to Him. Oh how the bells of Jesus' heart ring when He hears a soul say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" You know how He suffered! See Him fastened to the tree! What is to pay Him for all His pangs? Nothing—nothing but the love of your hearts when you come to Him with all your sins and say, "Jesus, forgive me!" May you, then, come and trust Him now, saying—

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that You bid me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

Our Lord for the "joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame." It is written that He rejoices over us with joy and singing, so that He reaps the fruit of His pains and groans in our salvation. When the shepherd lays the sheep on his shoulders, he returns home rejoicing, for he has found the sheep which was lost. The joy of finding the strayed one compensates him for all his toil; he forgets the length of the road, the toilsome climb up the mountains in search of it. It is found! It is found! That is enough: that one joyful cry embodies the measure of his satisfaction and rewards. How Christ delights to save! This is how Christ is rewarded for His soul's travail.

Abraham's servant, too, *desired it for his own sake, because he was a faithful steward, and wanted to do his business well.* And how we desire your conversion for our sake! It will make us so happy! There is no bliss that can come to the soul of the Christian minister like the bliss of knowing that he has been made the means of bringing some to Christ. It is in this way that we receive at once the fulfillment of the Scripture, "In keeping His commandments there is exceedingly great reward." We get our reward while we are obeying His precept, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature." Our chief reward is in heaven, but even now, whenever a lost sheep is found, or a prodigal restored by sovereign grace through us, we immediately receive recompense. My dear brothers and sisters in the Sunday school, your reward is on high, but do you know what it is to have a crown of rejoicing even here? I am sure you do, if ever you have seen that some young spirits have been led by you to the Savior. Your hearts full weary before, have been refreshed and

you have gone back to your labor with more zeal than ever. Your desire has been increased, and you long more intensely after souls. Ask our brothers, the city missionaries, and our sisters, the Bible-women, "What is your encouragement in your arduous work?" They would reply that next to the Master's presence and the hope of His commendation at last, they placed the joy of doing good and seeing men, once as heathenish as any found in foreign lands, sitting at the feet of Jesus, all their nature changed, a legion of demons expelled, and now clothed and in their right mind—these once lost ones are found; the dead are alive again.

But the principal reason that the man wished it, was *for Rebekah's sake*. He knew that Isaac would make a good husband for her. And we know that Jesus Christ will make a blessed Husband to your souls. He will enrich you with all the treasure of His grace. He will clothe you with His robe of righteousness. He will comfort you with His love. He will cheer you in this world. He will take you home to dwell with Him in the many mansions above. You will find Him to be a precious Christ to you, and when you get to Him you will say, "I never knew what happiness meant till I found Him." You will be grateful to think that you are saved; and therefore, for your own sakes, we desire that this very night you may give up your sins; that the Spirit of God may draw you by His grace, to cast yourselves upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus, trusting in Him to save you, as He will do, if you put your faith in Him. Think for a while, I beseech you, how much is to be gained by your immediately seeking the Savior! You at once are free from the guilt and condemnation of sin; you are at once clothed with a peerless robe of righteousness; immediately "all things are yours"—that very moment "all things begin to work together for your good." You have heaven then for your home, and your citizenship is in the kingdom of glory. You shall never more lack any good thing. No evil can befall you or any plague come near your dwelling. Time would fail me to try to calculate your immediate blessedness. And then you make the eternal life sure and certain, whereas you may delay and delay, till you lose the life which now is and that which is to come. For your sakes we desire your immediate salvation. Our hearts are filled with joy and gladness, as we sit at the King's table in His banqueting house, and His banner over us is love; but we remember our friends outside, in darkness, poverty, and need, and we would gladly call them in to our feast. There is room enough; and our hearts would be yet more filled with joy if we could see the edging completely filled with guests. O all you hungry ones, come and eat with us of angels' food, and drink with us of cups of salvation! Here is a royal feast—oxen and fatlings are killed; all things are ready; come to the wedding; the Master bids you come at

once. Why remain in hunger and fear outside? Enter freely. Tarry not till the door is shut, and you are left in the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

IV. Now, lastly, WE BELIEVE THAT THIS DESIRE OF OURS IS A VERY REASONABLE ONE, and we think we can prove it without the necessity of entering upon a long argument.

We will put before you, with this view, two or three little pictures. Alexander conquered the world, and we should like you to do so, in the best of senses. We will ask Alexander his secret. "Alexander, you have overcome Darius; you have driven the Persians before you as a lion drives a herd of sheep; how did you do it?" The very question was once asked of him personally, and his answer was this—*"I never delayed."* Everybody admits that, in his way, Alexander was a worldly-wise man, and eminently successful, and here was the secret of it—"I never delayed." Do you hear that, young man? You want to be great? You want to be happy? What is your ambition? Learn from Alexander. I think that a greater than he could have said that in his life—I mean the apostle Paul. How was it that he was able to do so much during that latter part of his life in which God blessed him? Why, he could have said, "I never delayed." If you would be in the kingdom of heaven, great, happy, honorable, useful, if you would have a crown that shall be weighty with a gem, learn from the lesson—"I never delayed."

There is another picture. A number of men are upstairs in a house, amusing themselves with a game of cards. What is that? The window is red! What is that cry in the streets? *"The house is on fire!"* says one. "Oh!" answers another, "Shuffle the cards again, let us finish the game; we have plenty of time." *"Fire! Fire! Fire!"* The cry rises more sharply from the streets, but they keep on. One of them says, "It is all right, I have the key of the door on the roof, and we can get out at the last minute. I know the way over the roof—it is all right." Presently one of them says, "Are you sure we can get through that door?" and he goes to try, but finds it locked. "Never mind," is the answer, "I have the key." "But are you *sure* you have the key?" "Oh, yes! I am sure I have; here it is, try it for yourself, and do not be such a coward, man, try it." The man tries the key. "It will not turn!" he says. "Let me try," says his friend. He comes and tries, and puts it in the lock, *"O God!"* he shrieks, *"It's the wrong key!"* Now, sirs, will you go back to your game? No, now they will strain every nerve and labor to open the door, only to find, possibly, that it is all too late for them to escape! So, some of you are saying, "Oh, yes! What the man says is well enough, but you know, we can repent whenever we like; we have a key that can turn the grace of God whenever we please; we know the

way—has he not told us tonight it is just to trust Christ, and we can do that whenever we please—we shall get out." *Ah, but suppose you cannot do that whenever you please?* Suppose the day comes when you shall call, and He will not answer, when you shall stretch out your hands, but no man shall regard? Suppose, suppose you should cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," and the answer should be, "I never knew you; depart, you cursed!" Besides, if you think that key will open the door, and you can repent now, *why not repent now?* You believe that you have full power to do so! O do it, do it, and do not trifle with that power, lest when the power is gone, you find too late that in one sense it never was there!

Do you want one other picture of the folly of delay? Ah, you heard of it some time back last winter, and I should think you must have heard of it with tears in your eyes—I mean that terrible accident on the ice in Regent's Park. Why didn't the people get off the ice when they could see it was weak? Why did they not leave it when it was beginning to break up into such small pieces as to be scarcely larger than paving stones? It was all very well to be on it when it was a solid cake; but why did they not flee at once when there was danger? Nobody can now answer that question; and there is only this to be said—*it is most probable that all those who were there meant to get off very soon.* Probably nine out of 10 of them may have thought to themselves— "Well, it is getting rather dangerous, and it is not quite the thing to be here; but just one more merry ring; let us just cut one more 'figure eight,' and have just one more dash up and down the slide; it will be firm enough for that; let us stand here for two or three minutes at any rate." *They were all going to get off, but*_____. Ah, there is the end of the story; except that it is even till this day continued by other people with the sighs, and cries, and lamentations of husbands and of wives, of children and of parents, who can now only regret the fatal delay, but can do nothing to make amends.

Ah, some of you are on the cracked ice of the world's pleasures, and of your own confidence. It is all bad—*why don't you get off?* "Oh," you say, "I shall get off by and by." Oh, I see you—there is something fascinating in your pleasures, and a man likes to see his neighbors happy. I see you skating over that dangerous ice; *but why don't you get off?* With some of you life is getting very frail. Ah, those lungs are hardly sound—you are spitting blood. The gray hairs are getting pretty plentiful on your heard. You have had a warning—you have had one seizure, and the doctor has told you what will be the consequences of another. *Why don't you get off when the ice is breaking up like this?* You may get off; you may get off tonight. If you perish it will not be the fault of one who would act the part of a Humane Society man, and say to you, "Now, before the last breakup

comes; now, before the rising of tomorrow's sun, which may bring the final breakup, escape for your life! Look not behind you!

May God the Holy Spirit draw you, lead you to the Savior, so you may find mercy in Him tonight!"

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—GENESIS 24.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

DAVID'S HOLY WONDER AT THE LORD'S GREAT GOODNESS
NO. 773

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 19, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Oh how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them who fear You, which You have worked for them who trust in You before the sons of men!"
Psalm 31:19.

YOU will observe in reading this Psalm that David was in deep distress; these are the words of his lamentation: "My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all my enemies, but especially among my neighbors, and a fear to my acquaintances: they who did see me outside fled from me. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel." In this forlorn condition he found consolation by turning his contemplations away from his present trouble to the goodness of his God, even as a mariner turns the helm and so escapes the rock. Herein he was wise, and instructed us to be wise also. To dwell upon our sorrows is but to increase them; to turn them over, and over, and over again is but to squeeze from them the most bitter drops which they contain. The more the dark pool is stirred, the blacker will it become. Relieve your thoughts, then! Trade in another market! Let your minds exchange the pressing sorrow for sustaining consolation; and what can be better, what nobler as a theme for inspiring hope, what mightier as a lever for uplifting the mind, than reflection upon the amazing goodness of God?

It has been said by a great physician, that when persons find much difficulty in sleeping, they have sometimes been able to win the embrace of "tired nature's sweet restorer," by fixing their minds upon a single sublime subject, a grand absorbing topic, a master theme or thought. As soon as the mind has been thoroughly absorbed in contemplation, it has been at rest, and the body has rested too. I know not how that may be, but certainly, when God would give "His beloved sleep" in times of distraction, and would lull their souls into a calm repose, there is no better sleeping pill which His hand can administer to the troubled spirit than a meditation upon the amazing goodness of the Lord our God. Or, to change the metaphor, we know that when young lads first go to sea, if they have before been unaccustomed to climb to elevated places, they are apt to grow dizzy when called to perform their duties on the mast; then the experienced captain instructs them to *"look up,"* for, if they look down, and measure timidly the height of the mast, and count the waves

as they roll against the sides of the vessel, and terrify their minds with thoughts upon the heaving of the ship, and the terrors of falling from their hold, they are most likely to fall; but, looking to the motionless stars, and the calm, blue sky, the brain grows calm, and the foot maintains its standing. We would say, then, to any who are tossed upon the sea of trouble tonight, imitate the example of David, and "look up." Turn your minds away from the slanderer and the persecutor; forget for a while the fever and the need, and remember the loving kindness of Jehovah. You may find it almost impossible to keep your minds always tending upwards, but at any rate, while you are here, "look up" with eyes uplifted to the hills from where your help comes. Happy will it be for you, if by the good Spirit of God you can but get your eyes so fixed upon the goodness of God that you shall become so fascinated, that your attention cannot be taken off that glorious object. It will be a blessing to you, a great blessing which will bear you through all your trials, and make you suck honey from the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.

Now note the text carefully, David thought of the goodness of God till he was lost in wonder, and being quite unable to express his feelings, he uttered an exclamation, "Oh, how great is Your goodness!" We will consider, first, *the subject of holy wonder mentioned in the text;* secondly *we will consider the partakers of this divine goodness;* then, thirdly, *we shall note some general matters which tend to enhance our admiration of the goodness of God;* and fourthly, *notice sundry teachings which flow from the whole subject.*

I. In the first place, observe in the text THE SUBJECT OF HOLY WONDER—"Your goodness."

We here perceive God's goodness in a twofold aspect, as laid up in store and already displayed in a measure, "Oh how great is Your goodness which You have *laid up!"* And secondly, "Oh how great is Your goodness which You have *worked* before the sons of men!"

1. We shall devoutly take the first of these. David is astonished at *the great goodness of God which is laid up;* the goodness of God which David had not as yet tasted, had not actually received, but which his faith realized, and looked upon as its fixed and settled heritage. The spirit of our text is that of Miss Waring's delightful hymn in which she exclaims—

"And a 'new song' is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set;
Glory to You for all the grace
I have not tasted yet."

We magnify the Lord for the grace which is yet to come; the laid up goodness, the corn that is in the granary, which the good Joseph is keeping till the time of famine comes; the water which is but just bubbling from the spring, and has not yet come streaming down to the plain, where our thirst will by-and-by require it. Now think, Christian, of what God has laid up for them who fear Him! First, how much He laid up *in His eternal purpose,* when He chose His people, and laid up for them the grand intention, "They shall be Mine, says the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels." Think of electing love, and of all the consequences which well

up from that eternal fountainhead. Here you have a subject for a life-long wonder—

"Father, 'twas Your love that knew us
Earth's foundation long before:
That same love to Jesus drew us
By its sweet compelling power,
And will keep us
Safely now, and evermore.
God of love, our souls adore You!
We would still Your grace proclaim,
Till we cast our crowns before You,
And in glory praise Your name,
Hallelujah! Glory be to God, and to the Lamb!"

Oh, how great is Your goodness which Your eternal purpose ordained and settled upon Your saints by an everlasting decree that it should be theirs, for so You had decreed it according to the counsel of Your own most wise and sovereign will. How great is Your goodness that You should choose us, and predestinate us to be conformed into the image of Your Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren, and we the happy brethren who should be transformed into His likeness!

How great is the goodness of God, *which He laid up in the covenant of grace!* He determined to bless us in a way of covenant relationship into which He entered on our behalf with our federal Head, the Lord Jesus. To attempt, my dear brothers and sisters, to read to you the treasures which God has made over to us in the covenant of grace, would be to attempt an impossibility. The catalog is far too comprehensive. Behold, He has given all things to you in the covenant of His eternal love, for all things are yours, whether things present or things to come—life and death, time and eternity; no, more, God Himself is yours! "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." The Father is *your* Father; the Son of God is *your* brother; the Spirit of God is *your* Comforter, who abides with you forever. In that golden case of the covenant of grace, all the wealth of the eternal is stored up for the chosen. David laid up in store for the temple, but Jesus has treasured up far more for His church; Jacob gave to Joseph one portion above his brothers, but our heavenly Father has given to all the family an inheritance surpassing all conception. Angels, nor principalities, nor powers can fully estimate the infinite wealth of blessedness laid up in the everlasting covenant.

Think, too, of what God has laid up *in the person of His Son*—the same treasure, only now more clearly revealed to us, and brought forth in the person of the Well-beloved, so that we may the more readily partake of it. In the ark of old, there were laid up the golden pot of manna and sundry other marvelous things, but what is there laid up in the ark of our covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ? beloved, there is laid up in Him all things that are necessary for you. Pardon for all your sins; justification through faith in His sacrifice; life through His death; sanctifying power is in the blood of Jesus; your preservation is in Christ's hands; your acceptance depends upon Him; a daily intercession goes up from the heart of your Lord Jesus on your behalf, and He constantly represents you before the

golden throne. All that you can need, for the whole journey from the place where you now are right up to the right hand of the Most High—all this is laid up for you. "You are complete in Him." "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." If you fear Him and trust Him, though meanest of all His people, yet all necessary grace and promised glory is laid up for you in the person, and work, and offices, and relationships of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And think, beloved, of what is laid up for you *in the work, office and mission of the Holy Spirit.* You have not yet realized what the Holy Spirit can do. You have been regenerated by Him; you have been made to pass from death unto life; you have been taught somewhat of the truth of God—He has revealed some of the things of God to you; you have been somewhat illuminated, somewhat strengthened, somewhat comforted, somewhat assisted in prayer, but none of you are aware of all that the Holy Spirit can do. When we see some men who have become eminent in divine grace, when we read their heavenly biographies, and observe how they walked with God, and seemed to live a life above the common lot of earth-born mortals, we should remember that they enjoyed no monopoly of grace; the bread on which they fed is common to all the household: whatever grace the best of men have had, you may have as much and more. When we measure the abundance of divine power in the Holy Spirit by what we see in eminent martyrs, confessors, apostles, and saints, we may cry with the psalmist, "Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them who fear You!" How happy, how blessed, how holy might believers be if they would but come and receive of the fullness of the Spirit's power! Do not imagine, my beloved friends, that the standard of your attainment is the maximum of a Christian. Do not consider that you have obtained all that God is willing to bestow. "You are not straitened in Him, but you are straitened in your own heart." There are loftier degrees of sanctification; there is a more eminent nearness of communion than the most of us are aware. The laid-up treasures in the Holy Spirit are probably vastly greater than any of us have ever been enabled to conceive.

I shall pause but a moment, to observe, that the greatest goodness of all, we sometimes think, but perhaps improperly, *is that goodness which is to be revealed when this life is over, which God has laid up for them who fear Him.* I am not sure that this is the greatest, since eternal love, itself, as a cause already given, is greater than the effect which is to follow. Courage, my brothers and sisters! The night lasts not forever: the morning comes. See you not the day star? Do you not see the hind of the morning leaping over the hills of darkness? The Lord Jesus Christ has said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." Now whatever may be the splendor of the millennial reign, we shall share in them; and I confess that the Word of God seems to me to reveal much of coming glory, but to reveal it in such a manner that it is not possible for any of us to cast it into a mold, and to say, with decisive certainty, "That is just

what the prophecy means." The glory that comes is too excessive for us to point to details. It is a blaze that might well blind those who seek to look upon it, and count the flashing beams. But there is a glory coming such, as the world never saw, and a kingdom which will swallow up all other kingdoms as Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the pretenders. There is a glory to come that shall be brighter than the glory of the sun, though that sun should flash forth with the light of seven days. A glory comes which excels and endures, and in this believers shall, all of them, have their share. I am inclined to think that they do err from the truth of God, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows, who teach that some of God's people will be shut out from this glory. There is nothing which God will give to some of His people, which He will not give to all His people. They shall all be with Christ where He is, that they may behold His glory. They shall all have a share, and I think an equal share too, in all the excellent things which God has laid up for them who fear Him. Whatever those things may be, and surely the most glowing language fails to picture them, for they are all too rich and rare for words, we can say of them without fear, "Oh, how great is Your goodness!"

Then ponder well the joys of *the eternal state.* Think of—

"Jerusalem the golden
With milk and honey blest."

Let your faith bear you on its wings to the jeweled city where—

"They stand, those halls of Zion,
Jubilant with song,
And bright with many an angel,
And all the martyr throng."

Those many mansions, the haven of rest, the shrine of holiness, the home of happiness, the summit of perfection, the abode of love, the royal palace, the throne of the great King. Long you not to soar? Pant you not for the better country? Do not heart and voice feel the sweet oppression of too much anticipated joy? Is it not a relief to cry, "Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them who fear You"?

Let us, dear friends, before we leave this subject, *rejoice in what God has laid up.* It is a pity that we should rejoice in nothing but our own experience, for this will sadly narrow the sphere of our praise. Our experience may be very slender as yet, but we should rejoice in what is laid up. If I cannot rejoice in what I am, I will rejoice in what I shall be; remembering the precious thought, that, "It does not yet appear what we shall be." If I cannot rejoice in what I have in the hand of experience, yet will I glory in that which I can grasp with the hand of faith; for even now it is mine, though it is laid up till I reach my majority, and have come to years when I shall be fit to receive it.

2. Now we must note that it is not all laid up. It is not all light that is sown for the righteous. We have some wheat that has grown up and yielded sheaves. There are some treasures which we enjoy now, and therefore we find David saying, "Oh, how great is Your goodness, *which You have worked for them who trust in You before the sons of men!"* The last few words look in our translation as if they belonged to the words,

"Them who trust you," but this is not the correct reading. There are certain reasons which render it necessary to read the sentence thus—"Which You have worked before the sons of men for them who trust you."

Now God has worked out many marvelous things for us before the sons of men. I will not stay long, for your thoughts are often there, upon *that which Christ worked out before the sons of men in Gethsemane's sweat and blood, in Gabbatha's scourging, in Golgotha's death.* Worked out! Ah, indeed, He worked out and brought in an everlasting righteousness! He has perfected forever them who are set apart. That one sacrifice of His secured the perfect salvation of all for whom He died as a surety. What did He not work out then? "It is finished!" He said, and He knew what He said. He knew that he had worked out, then and there, the perfect redemption of every one of His people.

But we may remind you tonight of *what God has worked out for you in your own experience in the work of the Holy Spirit upon your soul.* Do not forget, doubting Christian, that there was a time when you had not enough grace to doubt. Do not forget, poor trembling one, that there was a time when you had not enough life to tremble. Be thankful, then, for the little grace which you can perceive in yourself. Do not hide from your eyes what God has done. Be grateful for what you have. Remember what I have often said to you—be thankful for the starlight and you will get moonlight; be thankful for the moonlight, and your God will send you sunlight. We must prize the smallest degree of divine grace. We often neglect what we have, and bemoan ourselves much because we are not perfect—though there is a measure in which we are to do that; but it were well not to do this too much or too exclusively. We must think of what God has done, and be grateful and bless His name, and then be encouraged in faith to ask for more. Blessed be God, with a thousand imperfections and faults, I still find in my soul some inkling of love towards His name. I feel some desire for the promotion of His glory—one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see—I see my sinfulness, see my weakness, see that Christ is just such a Savior as I need, and I do with my whole heart rely upon Him—shall I not be thankful for this? Is not this far more than Nature could have given me? If you can honestly use such language as I have just uttered in your hearing, be thankful and in deepest humility rejoice. Be grateful for grace within, and say, "Oh, how great a thing is this, for a dead soul to be made to live; for a filthy soul to be washed in the blood; for a naked soul to be clothed with heavenly righteousness; for a lost sheep to be brought into the fold; for a prodigal to be made to sit at his father's table; oh, how great is Your goodness which You have worked out for me, which has taken me away from my evil companions—turned me away from haunts of vice and iniquity, and made me to love what once I hated, and to delight in that which was once dreary and dull to my soul."

But, brothers and sisters, we have also another instance of what God has worked out for us in *the shape of providential mercies.* How great is the goodness of God as shown in what He has worked out for us in prov-

idence! We have all some providence to remember which seems very special *to us;* but all providence is special if we look at it from the right point of view. A certain father had agreed to meet his son at a spot halfway between their residences which were far removed from each other. When the son reached the halfway spot, he said, "Father, I have great reason to bless God, for I have met with a very special providence; my horse stumbled and threw me three times, and yet I was not injured." "Thanks be to God," said the father, "and I have met with a very special providence too, for which I thank God, and that is, that my horse never stumbled once, but brought me safely all the way." If you happen to meet with an accident and are almost killed, you say it is a special providence if you are preserved, but is it not a providence that you go many and many a journey, and no harm befalls you whatever? Let us bless God for the mercies we do not see—the innumerable dangers from which we are preserved; the great needs which are supplied before we know them to be needs. From childhood up to youth, and on to manhood, what flowers of mercy have bloomed in our pathway; what tender hands have led us; what mighty arms have upheld us; what a watchful eye has been fixed upon us! "How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand."

Perhaps you do not perceive any great goodness of God in your particular position, at this present crisis. You are very poor, and very lonely. Well, there will be a day, if you are the Lord's child, when you will see God's superlative love in the lot marked out for you. For the present believe it, and, believing it, you have an opportunity of honoring God in your distress which would not be yours if you were in another condition. When you shall know the end as well as the beginning, you will see that it was better for you to have been poor and needy than to have been rich and increased in goods. Meanwhile, count it enough reason for perpetual song that you possess—

"What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,
The soul's calm sunshine and the heartfelt joy."

There are other aspects in which I might have brought out the text, but I prefer to leave each one among you to tune his own harp, and give to his Lord the sweet spontaneous music of a soul aglow with gratitude.

II. I shall now, very briefly, take you on to the second point, which is THE FAVORED PERSONS WHO ENJOY THE LORD'S GREAT GOODNESS.

"Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up *for them who fear You;* which You have worked *for them who trust in You."* As you know, the phrase, "the fear of God," is used, especially in the Old Testament, for the whole of piety. It does not signify merely the one virtue of fear—it does not signify that feeling at all in the sense of slavish fear—but it takes a wide sweep. The man who had the fear of God before his eyes, was one who believed in God, worshipped God, loved God, was kept back from evil by the thought of God, and moved to good by the desire to please God. The ungodly were the wicked ones, those who had no God.

Those who had a godly fear were found diligently walking in holiness. The fear of God, I say, was the expression used for the whole of religion. Still, fear itself is a very important element in the Christian's character, if it is the right kind of fear. We have nothing to do with the terror of the bond slave, for we are free, and "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." Blessed be God, we have no fear of h ell. It is not possible for a believer to be there! Talk of casting a believer into h ell? As well talk of casting the Redeemer Himself there! It is impossible. We have no fear, even, of losing our standing before God, for we do not stand before Him in ourselves, but in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot fall, finally and fatally, unless Jesus can fall. "Because I live," He says, "you shall live also." But *this* is our fear—the fear which a dear child has of a tender father. It is not afraid that its father will kill it, or cease to love it, or banish it, and turn it out of his house. It knows better; it trusts its father too well to indulge in such mischievous suspicions; but because it loves him, it fears to offend him. This is the very atmosphere in which a Christian breathes. He fears God, and consequently desires to keep His commandments.

But you notice that the synonym used in the text is *"trust,"* and therefore it is plain that trust in God is the sum and total of religion. Why is it put so—"Laid up for them who fear You; worked for them who trust in You"—unless it is true that he who trusts God fears God? The whole compass of the fear of God is gathered up into a center in that point of trust. Why so? Why, my brothers and sisters, *because trust is the root of true fear.* To trust God is the root of all genuine religion. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." Faith is the foundation of all the other graces. Faith unites us vitally to the Lord Jesus Christ, and then from Him, as from the trunk, the sap of divine grace flows into the branch, and the fruit is produced; but take away faith, and we are separated from Christ, and then there can be no fruit. Therefore, because faith is the root, the seed containing the whole of the substance and essence of piety, it is put for the entire fear of God.

Then again, faith, or trust is the *test of the genuineness of religion.* He whose religion is everything else but trust in God, has no true religion. He may be very precise in ceremonies; he may be exceedingly exact in morality, but if he is relying upon these things, then he has no true trust, and he has no right fear of God. But he who observes the Lord's will, and at the same time rests upon God, and upon Him alone, depending upon the precious blood of Jesus as his only confidence, he is the man whose fear of God is such as God can accept. So you see, because trust is thus the touchstone of true religion, therefore it is put for the whole thing.

Moreover, *trust is the flower of the fear of God.* After all, the grandest thing that a man can do is trust God. I should be prepared to prove, if there were time tonight, that there is in trust in God the whole compass of all the other virtues; or, that, to put it in other words, if you will put trust under the necessary conditions, it will educe out of its own loins all

the other attributes of the perfect man. Only let a man trust in Christ, and he has done the grandest thing that can be done. The highest morality is to trust Christ. What did the Master Himself say? The Jews asked Him, "What is the work of God?" They wanted to know what was that highest work which man could do that was worthy to be called God's work, the work of God, the highest work and the best; and Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you believe on Jesus Christ, whom He has sent." When you have trusted God, you have done more than they who have kept the ceremonies of the Law to the letter. When you have trusted God, you have done more than they who cringe at Moses' feet, and shake and quake before the mountain that was altogether on a smoke. They crawl like slaves, abjectly, at their Master's feet, but you stand up like freeborn sons! You do the Lord far higher homage when you trust His love, His power, His truth, than legalists do with all their toiling, and their striving, and their works. The grandest virtue, the very highest point of all excellence, is to trust in God as He reveals Himself in His Word.

Now, it appears that the goodness of God is laid up for them who fear Him, and worked for them who trust Him. Dear hearer, will you ask yourself anxiously whether you fear God, and further, whether you fear Him in such a way as to have trust in Him? Have you these two indispensable spiritual gifts? Are you believers in Jesus Christ, dear hearers? Some of you are, I know. I rejoice with you that God has brought you into the ark of salvation by the door of faith. But are you all such as shall be saved? There is no salvation except by faith, remember, all other methods are delusions. It is faith in Jesus Christ which brings eternal salvation to you; without this, despair is your portion. If you have not this precious grace, may the Lord bestow upon you the faith which works by love and purifies the soul, that you, believing in Him, may have the power given you to become the sons of God, which power He gives to as many as believe on His name.

III. And now, only two or three words upon the third point, and that is coming back to the first reflection—the greatness of God's goodness to the people who have been described. There ARE ONE OR TWO THINGS WHICH MAKE US SEE THAT GREATNESS.

First, *observe the multitude of these people.* God's people have been 10,000s times 10,000s in number. They are a "little flock" in comparison with the outside world, but no doubt they shall be, at the end, "a multitude that no man can number." Now, the goodness of God to any one of them is quite unsearchable, and not to be estimated; but what must be the great goodness which He has laid up for all His people, for all them who fear and trust Him?—

"Great God, the treasures of Your love
Are everlasting mines!"

It is no small task to water one garden in the heat of the summer, so that every flower shall be refreshed, and no plant overlooked. How great is the might of Him who, from the salt sea, extracts the precious clouds of sweet rain to fall not only on gardens, but the pastures of the wilder-

ness, and the wild forest trees, till all nature laughs for joy, the mountains and the hills break forth into singing, and the trees of the field clap their hands. Brothers and sisters, it is a great thing to put a cup of cold water to the lips of a disciple; it shall not lose its reward. To refresh the heart of one of God's saints is no mean thing; but think how great is God's goodness which puts a cup of salvation to every Christian's lips, which waters every plant of His right-hand planting, so that everyone can have his leaf continually green, and his fruit ever brought forth in due season.

Think again, dear friends, *of the undeservingness of each one of these.* There is not one of those who feared and trusted Him that was worthy of the least grain of His mercy. They were many of them the chief of sinners—some of them peculiarly so—and yet this goodness, this great goodness of God, came to them, exemplifying its greatness because of the greatness of their transgressions. Was there anything of worthiness about the prodigal who had devoured his substance with harlots in his riotous living? Was not his prodigality a fire to set off the brightness of the father's love, who said, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found"? When God saved Jonah by the whale which was prepared for him, did He do it because Jonah was deserving of it? Very far from it; he was fleeing from God's presence, and the path of duty, and God's goodness to him is thrown out in bold relief by the dark unworthiness of that unfaithful and timid prophet. Well may we say, as we notice our own waywardness and folly, and contrast it with divine mercy, "Oh, how great is Your goodness!"

Remember, too, *the need they were in.* You can measure the greatness of the goodness of God by the distance from the place where Adam left his fallen posterity, broken by the Fall, to the position at the right hand of Christ, where God's eternal mercy shall place them forever. Picture for yourself a place full of all manner of vile and loathsome diseases, where the deadly fever and the living-death called leprosy, are found. See yon man who enters, braving all the dangers of infection, that he may heal the sick and restore the wretched ones to health and life! How great his goodness! But is even that to be compared to the goodness of God's Son, who not only ran the risk, with some chance of escape, but deliberately "was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"? "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree" willingly, deliberately, and came of set purpose to die for us—

"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity never withdrew."

Think, brothers and sisters, of the great goodness of God to His saints—and this will help to make it greater—*in contrast to the great evil of man to them.* Some of these saints have died cruel deaths. The most of them have had to pass through disgrace and scorn; but oh, how great is

Your goodness which You have worked in them, sustaining them all, and making them more than conquerors through Him who loved them! David speaks in one of his psalms of his enemies as besetting him "like bees"; and in another place he says of his God, "You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me." Now, how great the divine goodness must have appeared to him in contrast with the stinging malice of his foes. Or, when the Master said to Peter, "Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." The love of his Lord must have appeared to him, if not at that time, yet afterwards, in brighter colors, because of Satan's dark designs against him. If Daniel mused in the lions' den, or the three holy children in the fiery furnace, they must have thought, all of them, as we should, amidst all our trials and conflicts, "How great is the goodness of God in opposition to the cruelty of man!"

There was a great purpose; there was a great covenant; there was a great sacrifice; there is a great providence; there is a great heaven; and there is a great Spirit to bring them there. Oh, how great is Your goodness to Your people!

I shall not further preach on that topic; I put you at the river's edge and bid you wade in, hoping that you may proceed as far as the apostle, when he said, "Oh, the depths!"

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT SHOULD THIS TEACH US?

Should not this make us grateful to God for such wondrous kindness? The Lord has not given His people to drink of a twinkling rivulet, but He has been pleased to give the river of *Himself* to them, that they may drink to the full. Did you ever get the meaning of that passage, "That you may be filled with all the fullness of God"? Oh, that is a text that one would like to preach from in heaven. If there are pulpits there, and congregations, give me that for a text above all others, except that best of all, "Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, to Him be glory." "Filled with all the fullness of God!" Beloved, have you learned this wonder? Will you now bless the Lord that there is such a marvel of His love for you to learn? You have already had as much as you could bear of God's goodness. You have had providential goodness and spiritual mercies. Is there no spark of gratitude in your soul? Can you not afford a song—at least a stanza? O you who think yourselves banished tonight, and are in the dark, lift up your heads. Sing of the light of God you once had, and of the Light that is yet to be revealed, that is laid up for them who fear Him, and which shall yet bless your eyes. Be grateful.

In the next place, when you think of the great goodness of God, be humble. I know of no consideration which tends more to humble us than the great mercy of God: like Peter's boat, which floated high in the water when there was nothing in it, but when it was filled with fish it began to sink, our minds are humbled by a sense of undeserved love—

"The more Your mercies strike my eye,
The more humble I shall lie."

A sense of divine goodness will never puff us up, but will mightily pull us down. It tends to make the believer say, "I am not worthy of the least of

all the mercies, and of all the truth, which You have showed unto Your servant!"

And, lastly, *let this inspire us with confidence.* If, tonight, we are bowed down and distressed, let us think of the laid-up goodness of God and go to Him for it. He will surely give, for He has laid it up. He will not deny, for He has prepared it. God seems to say to His people tonight, as of old He said to the multitudes outside His banqueting hall, "My oxen and fatlings are killed, come to the supper!" All that you need is provided in Christ. Come in, come in! "Eat, eat," says the spouse in the song, "drink, yes, drink abundantly." O beloved, you cannot diminish the fullness of Christ! Come, now, and put your mouths down to the wellhead, and drink a draught such as old behemoth drank when he said he would drink the Jordan dry at a draught. Believer, you may have all you can take; there is no stint or limit here! "Open your mouth wide," says the Lord, "and I will fill it." Be not slack concerning the promise, in receiving it, for God will not be slack in keeping it. Only be strong, and full of trust, and you shall live to bless the Lord your Rock, in whom is no unrighteousness or unfaithfulness, but who keeps truth unto His people forevermore.

I would to God that all of you had experienced this great goodness of God, but if you have not, and I know some of you have not, there are three thoughts that I would leave upon your minds, which should make you feel that He is great and good, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "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." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Trust the Master, and you are saved!

May the boundless goodness of God magnify itself in us all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 31.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

A SHARP KNIFE FOR THE VINE BRANCHES
NO. 774

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 6, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit." John 15:2.

THESE are *the words of Jesus.* Unto you who believe He is precious; and every word that He speaks is precious for His sake: you will be sure, then, to give every syllable its weight, and to let each word fall upon your soul as coming directly from His lips. These are the words of *our Lord Jesus* just before His departure *from the world.* We reckon the words of dying men to be worth keeping, but especially of such a matchless man as our Lord and Master. It may be said of Him, "You have kept the best wine until now;" for, in this chapter, and in that which follows, we have some of the choicest, deepest, and richest words that the Master ever uttered. You will endeavor then, to hear Him speaking as upon the verge of Gethsemane; you will listen to these sentences as coming to you associated with the groans and bloody sweat of His agony. *These are words, moreover, about us,* and, therefore, to be received by us with profound attention; the most of us who are here are in Christ, some one way or another; the majority of us profess to be Christians; the text, then, is directed to us. When Jesus speaks about anything, it is weighty, and demands our ear, but when He speaks about ourselves to ourselves, we must give Him the heart as well as the ear, and give most earnest heed to the things which He speaks to us, lest by any means we let them slip. We may have to regret one day that we did not listen to His voice in love, for we may have to hear it when we *must* listen to it, when the tones have become those of judgment, and Jesus the judge shall say unto us, "I know you not," even though we shall venture to plead that we ate and drank in His presence, and that He taught in our streets.

Having, then, your solemn attention, we will read the text again: "Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

The text *suggests self-examination; conveys instruction;* and, *invites meditation.*

I. In the first place, it SUGGESTS SELF-EXAMINATION.

I hear in these solemn words the tones of His voice of whom Malachi said, "Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire; and like fullers' soap." I discern in these two heart-searching sentences, the voice of Him of whom John said, "His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Truly the Lord's "fire is in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem." Happy shall that man be who can bear to be thrust into the

flames, and to be covered with the hot coals of the burning truths of God here taught; but he shall be found reprobate who cannot bear the trial.

1. Observe that our text mentions *two characters who are in some respects exceedingly alike;* they are both branches, they are both branches in the vine: "Every branch in *Me."* How much alike persons may apparently be, who in God's sight stand at opposite poles of character! Both the persons described in the text were in Christ: in Christ in different senses it is obvious, because the first persons were not so in Christ as to bring forth fruit, consequently, as fruit is that by which we are to judge a man, they were not in Christ effectually, graciously, influentially, or so as to receive the fruit-creating sap. If they had brought forth fruit, their fruitfulness would have been a sign that they were in Christ savingly. Who will venture to say that a man who yields no fruit of righteousness can be really a Christian? Yet they were in Christ in some sense or other; that is to say, the two characters were equally esteemed to be Christians; their names were enrolled in the same church register; in the common judgment of men they were equally Christian; according to their own profession, they were so; in many other respects which we need not now catalog, they were both in Christ as His avowed disciples, as soldiers professedly fighting under His banner, as servants wearing His uniform.

These two persons were probably equally sound in their doctrinal views, they held the same precious truths of God. If they heard falsehood, they were equally earnest to denounce it. When they listened to the gospel, they received it with joy, and so received it as to be willing to assist in the spread of it, and even to make sacrifices for its extension. These persons were equally attentive to ordinances. How often has it happened that two persons of widely different states before the Lord, have been baptized at the same hour, in the same water, into the same name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and have then broken bread together with equal apparent fervency, and with equal professions of enjoyment and devotion! These people have been equally fair in their profession; their moral conduct has, in the judgment of all onlookers, been much the same; they have avoided everything of ill repute, and they have in their measure sought after that which was comely and lovely in the estimation of men. Ah, there will often be found two who publicly pray alike, have an equal gift in prayer—and what is worse, preach with equal earnestness and zeal, and to all appearance their family prayer is maintained with the same consistency, and yet for all this, the end of the one shall be to be cast away as a branch to be burned, while the end of the other shall be to bring forth fruit unto perfection, with everlasting life as the reward.

Ah, friends, man can counterfeit cleverly, but when the devil helps him, he becomes master of the art! You will see pieces of coinage which it is almost impossible for you to discover to be mere counterfeits by their appearance, or even by their ring; in the scales of weight they almost deceive you, but you put them into the fire, and then the discovery is made. Doubtless there are thousands in all Christian churches who have the stamp and the impress of the King upon them, and they look like the genuine shekels of the sanctuary, who after all are only fit to be like bad money, fastened down on the footstool of the judgment seat, with a nail

driven through them, to their everlasting reprobation and disgrace. How can we tell a bold man from a coward? Two soldiers wear the same uniforms—they talk equally loudly of what they will do when the enemy shall come. It is the battle that tests and proves them; some peculiar phase of the conflict will bring out the difference; but till the battle comes, how easy it is for the base coward to play the hero, while perhaps the bravest man may modestly shrink into the rear! Our text, then, brings before us two characters apparently alike.

2. Then, in the second place, *it shows us the distinction between them*—the great and solemn difference. The first branch brought forth no fruit; the second branch bore some fruit. "By their fruits you shall know them." We have no right to judge of our neighbors' motives and thoughts, except as far as they may be clearly discoverable by their actions and words. The interior we must leave with God, but the exterior we may judge, and must judge. There is a sense in which we are not to judge men; but there is another sense in which he would be an arrant fool who did not constantly exercise his judgment upon men. "By their fruits you shall know them," is our Lord's own canon of sacred criticism. If you would judge men and judge yourselves, this is the one test—"by their fruits."

Now, then, what do you professors say who are present here today; you who are so regular in your attendance upon the means of divine grace? Will you now search yourselves to see whether you have any fruit? That you may be helped in such an investigation, let me remind you that the apostle Paul has given us a list of these fruits, in his fifth chapter of the epistle to the Galatians. He says in the 22nd verse, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Nine kinds of fruit—all of these should be "in us and abound." Let us question ourselves whether we have any of them.

Say, professor, have you brought forth the fruit of *"love"?* Searching question, this! I do not ask if you can talk of love, but, do you feel it? I do not say, is love upon your tongue? But, does love rule your heart? Do you love God as a child loves its father? Do you love the Savior from a sense of gratitude to Him who bought you with His blood? Do you feel the love of the gracious Comforter, who dwells in you, if you are indeed a child of God? What do you know about love to the brethren? Do you love the saints, as brothers and sisters in Christ, whether they belong to your church or not; whether they please you or serve your turn or not? Say, do you love God's poor? Do you love God's persecuted and despised ones? Answer, I pray you. What about love to the kingdom of the Lord's dear Son, and to the souls of men? Can you sit still and be satisfied with being saved yourself, while your neighbors are being damned by the thousands? Are your eyes never wet with tears for impenitent souls? Do the terrors of the Lord never get hold upon you, when you think of men plunging themselves into hell? "He who loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" Have you this fruit, then? If not, "every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away."

Next comes *joy*. Does your religion ever give you joy? Is it mere matter of duty, a heavy chain for you to drag about like a convict, or is your reli-

gion a harp for you to dance to the tune of? Do you ever rejoice in Jesus Christ? Do you know what the "joy of the Lord" means? Does it ever give you joy to think that He is the same even when the fig tree does not blossom, and the herd is cut off from the stall? Do you feel a joy in reading the promises of God's word? Have you a joy in secret prayer; that joy which the world never gave you, and cannot take away from you? Have you a secret joy, like a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, which is only open to you and your Lord, because your fellowship is with Him, and not with the sons of sin? He who never mourned because of sin, has never repented; but he who has never rejoiced because of forgiveness, cannot have seen the cross. Come, then, have you produced this fruit of joy? The Lord give it more and more to you! If you have never had it, then hear the sentence—"Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away."

Next follows "peace." Oh, blessed fruit, an autumn fruit, mellow and sweet, and fit for an angel's tooth! It is the fruit the blessed feed upon in heaven—peace with God, peace of conscience, peace with one's fellow men, "the peace of God which passes all understanding," which "keeps the heart and mind through Jesus Christ." "Great peace have they which love Your law: and nothing shall offend them." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Ah, my hearers, some of you make a great deal of noise perhaps about religion, and yet never have peace of conscience. This is what ceremonialists never can obtain. "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" of outward ordinances, and carnal, vainglorious, pompous ceremonies. Of our altar, where the finished sacrifice is eaten as a peace offering, they cannot eat. They find no peace after all their "masses," and holy offices, and processions, and sacred hours, and priestcraft, and I know not what; poor slaves, they go down to their graves as much in bondage as ever, with the dreary prospect of a purgatorial fire before them—no delightful prospect of waking up in the likeness of Christ; no sense of the truth of that glorious passage, "and you are complete in Him." He who has Christ has this one of His fruits, namely, peace. He who knows no peace with God has good need to tremble.

Mention is next made of *long-suffering*. I fear there are many professors who have very little of this, a quality which may be viewed in many aspects. There is patience, which bears God's chastising hand, and does not turn against Him, but says, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Long-suffering towards God is suffering long. Then there is long-suffering towards man, bearing persecution without apostasy, bearing slander and reproach without revenge, bearing the errors and mistakes of mankind with tender compassion. The believer should have much of this. Some of us, perhaps, may be naturally quick-tempered. Divine grace must overcome angry passions. It is not for you to say, "I cannot help it;" the fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering—you must help it. If there is no change in your temper, there is no change in you at all; you still have need to be converted. If the grace of God does not help you in a measure to keep under that temper which will be there, but which you must restrain, you have need to go to God and ask Him to

make sound work in you, for there is no work of grace there yet. We must have long-suffering, or we may be found fruitless, and then woe unto us.

Next in order is *gentleness*, by which I understand kindness. The Christian is a man of kindness. He recognizes his kindness with his fellow men; he wishes to treat them as his kin. He has compassion for those who are suffering; he endeavors to make his manners kind and courteous. He knows that there is a natural offense in the cross to carnal men; he does not wish therefore to make any offense of his own. He desires in his own life not to be morose, suspicious, harsh, proud or domineering, but he seeks to imitate his Master, who said of Himself, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." The believer in Christ should be gentle towards all men with whom he comes in contact. This is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and, I may add, a fruit of the Spirit in which many professors are terribly deficient. Do not think that I judge you. I judge you not—there is one who judges you, it is this word of God which we speak. Gentleness is the fruit of the Spirit, and if you have it not, you have not this fruit of the Spirit; and what says the text, "Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away!"

We are next reminded of *goodness*, by which is undoubtedly meant beneficence, benevolence, generosity, not merely kindliness of manner, but bounty of heart. Oh what a fine thing it is when our Christianity gives us a noble spirit! We cannot all be nobles in pocket, but every child of God should be a noble in his heart. "Come in," said a poor Scotch woman to some of the Lord's people, "I have room for 10 of you in my house, but I have room for 10,000 of you in my heart." So should the believer say, "Come in, you who are in need; I have not the power to help many of you, but I have the will to help all of you if I could." The Christian should be like his Lord and Master, easily entreated, ready to communicate, making it his delight and his business to distribute, like a cloud that is full of rain, and empties itself upon the earth; like the bright and sparkling sun scattering his beams abroad, and not hiding or hoarding his light. If you have not this fruit of the Spirit in some measure, I beseech you to remember the solemn words of the text, "Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away."

Then comes *faith*, by which is probably not meant the grace of faith which is rather a root than a fruit, yet that is included. The fruit of the Spirit is indeed faith in God; without this, there is not even the commencement of anything like security in the soul. Do you believe on the Son of God? Have you faith? If you have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, it is a sign of life within you! If you have little of it, pray, "Lord, increase our faith!" But the faith here, I think, means faithfulness—faithfulness towards God, faithfulness towards conscience. How little some Christians make of that nowadays! Why, they swallow their consciences. There are ministers who subscribe to words which they know to be deceiving the people, and help to buttress a church which is doing its utmost to lead this nation into downright Popery. The good and gracious ministers in the Establishment are the prop and pillar of it, and by their influence they maintain a system which enables traitors to pollute this land with Popery. O that our friends had a little more tenderness of conscience, and would come out from their unhallowed alliance with the

Popish ritualists. How earnestly do I pray that none of us have the remotest connection with anything which would take us back to that Antichrist which God hates—which He so hates, that He has bid His servant John, call the apostate church by a dreadful name, a brand of infamy, a name which God never uses till He has cast off and utterly abhorred a thing. My brothers and sisters, may your consciences be faithful, and may you be faithful to your consciences: men who trifle with doctrine, it seems to me, little know what sins they commit. I tell you who trifle with doctrines that you are as bad as thieves; you are worse, for the thief only robs men, but you rob God and your own souls. By helping to foster error, you are heaping together the elements of a pestilence which, unless divine grace prevents, will utterly destroy this land. We must have faithfulness also, in our dealings with our fellow men in business. Saints are men of honor. The Christian "swears to his own hurt, and changes not." He does not take an oath, but his word is his bond. O that we may have this fruit of the Spirit—faithfulness, directness, straight-forwardness, doing the right, loving the true, and walking uprightly before the Lord our God!

The next fruit is *meekness*. May we possess much of this, for there is a peculiar benediction promised to the meek: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." The Christian is to be as harmless as a dove. In his Master's battles, bold as a lion, but for himself and for his own cause, tender, gentle, shunning debate, loving quietness, ready to take a rebuke rather than to administer one; feeling himself to be weak and frail. Moses was the meekest of men, often provoked, but only once speaking unadvisedly with his lips. It is marvelous how he bore with the people; they were the most provoking people in the world, except ourselves; but yet, like as a nurse is tender with a sick child, even so was he with a foolish people. How often did they provoke him and grieve his spirit! He grew angry in ignorance, and dashed the two tablets of stone upon the ground, when he saw the idolatry of the people. Moses, the meekest of men, could not bear that; and God's meekest servants grow wrathful when they think of the idolatry into which this land is sliding so rapidly. But meek we must be towards all men; and if we have not this fruit, the Master says, "Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away."

Do not forget *temperance*, which is now generally used in respect to meats and drinks, but which has a far wider significance, though it includes that. The man who indulges the appetites of the flesh, and cannot control himself as to eating and drinking, need not even pretend to be a Christian. He has first to prove that he is equal to a beast before he may pretend to be a child of God; he has first to show that he is a man before he may claim to be a Christian. Those who indulge in drunkenness shall drink of the wine of God's wrath before long, and then how bitter will their sweet wines be to them! How will that which has been sweet to the throat, be as poison in the heart forever and ever! If we have not that kind of temperance, evidently we can know nothing about true religion. There must be an equal temperance in all other things, a temperance in your dress, in your expenditure, in your temper, and indeed, in every act. There is a moderation to be observed, a narrow road to be followed, which the tutored eye of the spiritual man can see, and which it is a fruit

of the Spirit for the spiritual foot to tread. God grant that we may have these fruits.

Beloved in the Lord, I am persuaded that no truth of God needs to be pressed more upon my own soul and yours than this, that positive fruit is the only test of our being in Christ. It is so easy for us to wrap ourselves up in the idea that attention to religious ceremonies is the test, but it is not so, for, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees," who were the most religious people of their day, "you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." I know it is easy to think, "Well, I do not indulge in drunkenness; I am no rogue; I do not do this or that." This matters little. Remember that the judgment will not be about those things which you do not do, but about positive things. How does Jesus Christ put that judgment matter? "I was hungry, and you gave me no meat: I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink: I was a stranger and you took Me not in: naked, and you clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and you visited Me not." The absence of positive fruit was that which condemned the lost. "Every tree," says John, "that bears no fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire." He does not say, "Every tree that bears bitter fruit, or sour grapes," but "Every tree that brings forth no fruit." Fruitless professors, tremble! I may not speak so as to make this truth of God penetrate as I wish it would into your inmost souls, but I pray the eternal Spirit to make it like fire in the bones of every deceived man and woman. If my Lord shall come to you, my hearer, day after day, as He once came to the fig tree, and should find leaves upon you and no fruit, I tell you He will say, "Henceforth let no fruit be on you forever," and you shall wither away. What is His own parable? The master of the vineyard said to the husbandman, "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?" And when the husbandman interceded, you will remember his intercession was only so far: "If it bears fruit, well: and if not, then after that you shall cut it down." Jesus the intercessor agrees with His Father the Husbandman; Mercy agrees with Justice; if there is no fruit, the tree must come down. May I beseech you to lay these things to heart; you must bear fruit unto God by the power of the Spirit, or it is down with you. God feels His axe this morning; it is sharp, and if He does but lift it, woe to you, barren fig tree! Woe, indeed, to me also, if I am found barren in the day of the Lord's appearing.

In closing this weighty business of self-examination, I must remind you that our Lord tells us, that although these persons were in some points alike, *the solemn difference between them led to a solemn result.* "Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away." There are many ways in which the Lord takes away barren branches. Sometimes He allows the professor to apostatize. He gets rich, and then he will not go to the place of worship which he used to frequent when he was a poorer man, and was humble enough to hear the gospel; he must go to some fashionable place, where he can listen to anything but the truth of God; and thus by his own pride he is taken away. Or else he is allowed to fall into open sin. We always should regret the falls of professors, but sometimes it is possible that discovered sins may be a blessing, for they take away from the church men who never ought to have been there, and who

were an injury to it. Many bright professors have stood well for a long time, but at last they have been snuffed out ecclesiastically by reason of their outward sins. God has taken them away. Some have been taken away in a more terrible sense by death; God has removed them. They have lived in the church and died in the church; but have been taken away in solemn judgment, and cast into the fire. Then there is a taking away which is worst of all, when the Master shall say, "Depart, you cursed!" Now, remember, these were respectable people; these were people like you—decent, good people, who attended a place of worship, and contributed, and were very moral, but still they had not divine grace in their souls. They had nominal Christianity, but not the fruit of the Spirit; and what was done with them? "Lord, cannot some mild means be used? How sad to see these branches cut off!" "No," He says, "if they bring not forth fruit, they must be taken away." "But, Lord, they never reeled in and out of the gin palace! Lord, they were much too good and much too amiable to be found among the debased and the debauched!" "Take them away; they brought no fruit, and they must be taken away." "But, Master, they were so diligent in the use of ordinances; they were so constant and regular in the form of prayer!" "They brought forth no fruit," says He, "take them away." There is only this one thing for them—if they had, through saving faith been made to bear the fruit of the Spirit, they would have been saved; but as there was no fruit, take them away.

What is done with those taken away? If I could take you just outside the garden wall, I would let you see a heap of weeds and slips that are taken from the vine, and there they are heaped together with a little straw, and the gardener burns them. The other branches with their purple clusters are in honor, but these dishonored things are burnt outside the gate. I cannot describe to you that day of doom, that terrible fate which shall come upon fruitless branches of the spiritual vine. They will be outside the gate with a great gulf fixed between them and heaven, where the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." If such people are cast away, what will become of some of you? If these good people who were in Christ, in a way, still perish because they brought forth no fruit, O you who are like hemlock in the furrows of the field, you who produce the grapes of Gomorrah and the apples of Sodom—what shall be your doom in the day of account when the Master shall come forth in robes of judgment to execute righteousness among the sons of men?

II. Briefly on the second point. THE TEXT CONVEYS INSTRUCTION.

Looking at it carefully, we observe that *the fruit-bearing branches are not perfect.* If they were perfect, they would not need pruning; but the fact is there is much of original inbred sin remaining in the best of God's people, so that whenever the sap within them is strong for the production of fruit, there is a tendency for that strength to turn into evil, and instead of good fruit evil is produced. It is the strength of the tree, and the richness of the sap which makes the branch produce too much wood, so that it needs pruning. The gardener desires to see that strength in clusters, but alas, instead it runs into wood. Now, observe that in a Christian when the sap comes into him to produce confidence in God, because of the evil that is in him, it often produces confidence in him and he who

would be strong in faith becomes strong in carnal security. When the sap would produce zeal, how very frequently it turns into rashness, and instead of zeal with knowledge, fanaticism is brought forth! Suppose the sap flows to produce self-examination, very generally unbelief is the outgrowth, and instead of the man doubting himself, he begins to doubt his Lord. How often have I seen even the joy of the Lord turned into pride, and when the man should rejoice in Christ Jesus, he has began to rejoice in himself, to grow proud and say, "What a fine experience I possess!" That love which we ought to bear towards our neighbors, how apt is that to run into love of the world and carnal complacency towards its evil ways! The gentleness which I praised just now often turns to a silly compliance with everybody's whim, and meekness which is a fruit of the Spirit, how often that becomes an excuse for holding your tongue, when you ought boldly to speak! The fact is, it is very difficult to keep ourselves, when we are in a flourishing state, from producing wood instead of grapes. God grant us divine grace to keep us from this evil; and I do not know how the grace can come except by His judicious pruning.

I say the fruit-bearing branches are not perfect because they bear a great deal that is not fruit, and, moreover, not one of them bears as much fruit as it ought to do. I do not agree with Mr. Wesley's opinion about perfection. It is very difficult to see how he could have done more than he did, but I do not doubt that even *he* felt that he might have been more like his Lord. None of the Lord's people with whom I ever came into communion have dared to think themselves perfect; and if they had said so, and proved it, I would have rejoiced to think that there were such people, but greatly sorrowed to find that I belong to a very different order of beings myself; for "in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good thing." The Master is bringing us upon our way to bring forth more fruit, but as yet, the fruit-bearing branches are not perfect.

Therefore we are taught, in the second place, *that pruning is the lot of all the fruitful saints.* You may escape it if you are not fruitful, you will be cut off, you will not be pruned, but all the fruit-bearing saints must feel the knife. Observe Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had not those patriarchs their trials? Moses and David, Jeremiah and Daniel; who among those escaped? Though they honored their Master much, who escaped without the pruning knife? And if you come to the believers of the New Testament, surely the flame was seven times hotter with regard to them than with regard to the elder brethren. How does the Lord prune His people, then? It is generally said by affliction; I question if that could be proved as it stands; it needs explanation. It is generally thought that our trials and troubles purge us: I am not sure of that; they certainly are lost upon some. Our Lord tells us what it is that prunes us. "Now," says He, in the third verse of the chapter, "you are clean (or pruned) through the word which I have spoken unto you." It is *the word* that prunes the Christian; it is the truth that purges him; the Scripture made living and powerful by the Holy Spirit, which effectually cleanses the Christian. "What then does affliction do?" you ask. Well, if I may say so, affliction is the handle of the knife; affliction is the grindstone that sharpens up the word; affliction is the dresser which removes our soft garments, and lays bare the diseased flesh, so that the surgeon's lancet may get at it; affliction makes us ready

to feel the word, but the true pruner is the word in the hand of the Great Husbandman. Sometimes when you lay stretched upon a bed of sickness, you think more upon the word than you did before. In the next place, you see more the applicability of that word to yourself. In the third place, the Holy Spirit makes you feel more, while you are thus laid aside, the force of the word than you did before. Ask that affliction may be sanctified, Beloved, but always remember there is no more tendency in affliction in itself to sanctify us than there is in prosperity; in fact, the natural tendency of affliction is to make us rebel against God, which is quite opposite to sanctification. It is the word coming to us while in affliction that purges us; it is God the Holy Spirit laying home divine truths, and applying the blood of Jesus, and working in all His divine energy in the soul; it is this that prunes us, and affliction is only the handle of the knife, or what if I say the ladder which the gardener takes to reach the vine, so that he may prune it better!

Now, it may be that some of us have been afflicted a great deal, and have not been pruned. I know some people who have been very poor, I do not see that they are any better for it, and I know some others who have been very sick, but I have never heard that they have been improved. Alas, some people are of such a character, that if they were stricken till their whole head were sick, and their whole heart faint, they would not be benefited; if they were beaten till they were all bruises and putrefying sores, they would still go on to rebel, for these things only provoke them to a greater hatred against the Most High. We must be pruned, but it must be by the word, through affliction.

Now, *the objective in this pruning is never a reason to condemn.* God does not purge His children with a view to visit them penally for sin; He chastises, but He cannot punish those for whom Jesus Christ has been already punished. You have no right to say, when a man is afflicted, that it is because he has done wrong; on the contrary, "every branch that bears fruit He purges." Just the branch that is good for something gets the pruning knife. Do not say of yourselves, or of other people, "That man must have been a great offender, or he would not have met with such a judgment." Nonsense! Who was a holier man than Job; but has any been brought lower than he? Why, the fact is, it is because the Lord loves His people that He chastens them, not because of any anger that He has towards them. Learn, beloved, especially you under trial, not to see an angry God in your pains or your losses, or your crosses but instead, see a husbandman who thinks you a branch whom He estimates at so great a rate, that He will take the trouble to prune you, which He would not do if He had not a kind consideration towards you.

The real reason is that more fruit may be produced; which I understand to mean more in *quantity*. A good man, who feels the power of the word pruning him of this and that superfluity, sets to work, in the Power of the Holy Spirit, to do more for Jesus. Before he was afflicted he did not know how to be patient. He learns it at last—a hard lesson. Before he was poor he did not know how to be humble, but he learns that. Before the word came with power he did not know how to pray with his fellows, or to speak to sinners, or lay himself out for usefulness; but now the more he is pruned, the more he serves his Lord. More fruit in *variety* too, may be

intended. One tree can only produce one kind of fruit usually, but the Lord's people can produce many, as we have already seen; and the more they are pruned the more they will produce. There will be all kinds of fruit, both new and old, which they will lay up for their Beloved. There will be more in *quality* too. The man may not pray more, but he will pray more earnestly; he may not preach more sermons, but he will preach them more thoroughly from his heart, with a greater unction. It may be that he will not be more in communion with God as to time, but it will be a closer communion; he will throw himself more thoroughly into the divine element of communion, and will become more hearty in all that he does.

This is the result of the pruning which our heavenly Father gives; and if such is the result, may the Lord keep on pruning, *for what greater blessing can a man have than to produce much fruit for God?* Better to serve God much than to become a prince. He who does much for Christ, shall shine as the stars forever and ever. He is glorifying God; he is blessing his fellow men; he is bringing joy into his own spirit. Oh, if on bended knee we might seek but one favor, I think we should not ask the wisdom which Solomon craved; we would petition for this, that we might bring forth much fruit, so that we might be Christ's disciples.

III. To conclude. Our text INVITES MEDITATION.

I will hint at the points on which it invites our thoughts. It suggests to every unconverted person here this one question. It seems that it is not very easy for the righteous to be saved—*"If the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the wicked appear?"* If the branches in Christ that bear no fruit, are taken away, what must become of the Sabbath-breakers, the despisers of God, the atheists, the drunks, the unchaste, the dishonest, the blasphemers? I raise the question—answer it! Let it burn into your soul!

Secondly, *what a mercy it is to the believer that it is pruning with him and not cutting off!* Ah, let the knife be very sharp, let the word of God throw us into the great deeps, till we almost despair; yet, thank God, we are not cast into hell! Dear friends, your prayer should be, "Lord, let Your word cut deep into me. Do not let the preacher mince matters with me. Deliver him from sewing pillows under my armholes, and lulling me to sleep. Lord, I would be faithfully dealt with! I put the proud flesh before You—cut it out, that the wound heals not so as to be worse when healed than it was when a running sore." What a mercy it is not to be cut off! Ah, Christian, you are desponding and doubting today, while the word is searching you, but you might have been in hell! Think of that. You are poor, or you are full of pain, but you might have been driven from the presence of God. How can you, as a living person, complain about whatever God may place upon you?

In the next place, it would be well to *think how gently the pruning has been done with the most of us* up till now, compared with our barrenness. I wonder the Lord has not cut us much more. He who has a deep-seated disease requires sharp medicine; and when the sore runs deep, the doctor must cut deep too. With all the rust that is on us, it is a wonder we are not filed more. There is so much alloy; it is amazing that we are not more often put into the fire. O Spirit of God, You have hard work with

some of us, still we bless You, for Your gentleness has been manifested very graciously. How tenderly have You dealt with our frail dust, O God of love!

Again, *how earnestly we ought to seek for more fruit.* If this is what God seeks after, *we* should be after it. If He often goes the length of pruning the vine, although He does not love to do it, for He does not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men for nothing, let us agree with God and seek to yield more fruit.

How concerned should every one of us be to be efficaciously and truly one with Christ! I ought to have said that the whole gist of the text lies in that "in *Me*, in *Me*, in *Me."* You see, if a man is not in Christ at all, why then, of course, there is no hope of any sort; and then, when he is in Christ, there come the questions—is he in Christ by living faith, by real trust? Has he the faith of God's elect? Has he been born-again from above? Is he a spiritual grace-taught soul? Let these be the questions which shall rest upon our minds. I would that this morning my text might be sweet to you; sweet, I said, because if for the moment it seems bitter, the end is sweetness. Faithful are the wounds of such a friend as Jesus. If He has wounded any of you, it is not to drive you from Him, but to make you cling closer to Him. Have you never learned that, when you feel the most humbled, most afraid, most full of sin, most conscious of your own imperfection, the best thing is to cling to Christ more? "Well, Lord, if I have been the most cursed hypocrite that ever lived, I will come to You now. If up to this moment I have been deceived, and have not had a grain of true faith, nor a single one of the fruits of the Spirit, yet here I am, a poor vile sinner! I fly to the fountain; a naked sinner, I wrap Your righteousness about my loins; a poor sin-sick, lost sinner, I look up to You on yonder cross, and I do believe that You can save me. From the very jaws of death, and out of the belly of hell, do I cry to You, and I know You will hear me." O sinners and saints, come to Christ again, whether you are His experimentally, or are strangers to Him, come to Him now, for still the gospel bell rings out sweetly, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." O God, grant us grace to come now afresh, and Yours be the praise! Amen, and Amen.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

GRACE—THE ONE WAY OF SALVATION
NO. 765

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

"But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."
Acts 15:11.

YOU who are conversant with Scripture will recollect that these are the words of the apostle Peter. Paul and Barnabas had been preaching the gospel among the Gentiles with great success, but "certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed," could not get rid of their old Jewish bigotry, and vehemently urged that the converted Gentiles ought to be circumcised, or else they could not be saved. They made a great clamor over this, and there was no small dissension and disputation. The children of the bondwoman mustered all their forces, while the champions of glorious liberty arrayed themselves for the battle. Paul and Barnabas, those valiant soldiers of the cross, stood out stoutly against the ritualistic brothers, and told them that the rite of circumcision did not belong to the Gentiles at all, and ought not to be forced upon them; they would not yield their free principles at the dictation of the Judaizers, but scorned to bow their necks to the yoke of bondage. It was agreed to bring the matter up for decision at Jerusalem before the apostles and elders; and when all the brothers had assembled, there seems to have been a considerable dispute, in the midst of which, Peter, speaking with his usual boldness and clearness, declared that it would be wrong to put a heavy yoke upon the necks of the Gentiles, which neither that generation of Jews nor their fathers had been able to bear, and then he concluded his address by saying, in effect, "Although these people are not circumcised, and ought not to be, yet we believe that there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, but by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." Herein Peter was not to be blamed, but to be greatly commended, for he spoke under the influence of the Spirit of God.

I. We shall use the text as concisely as we can for three important purposes; and in the first place, we shall look upon it AS AN APOSTOLIC CONFESSION OF FAITH.

You notice it begins with, *"We believe."* We will call it, then, the "Apostle's Creed," and we may rest assured that it has quite as clear a right to that title as that highly esteemed composition which is commonly called the "Nicene, or Apostle's Creed." Peter is speaking for the rest, and he says, "We believe." Well, Peter, what do you believe? We are all attentive. Peter's answer is, "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." There is a great deal of talk in

our day—foolish, vainglorious, idiotic, senseless talk, as we think, about apostolic succession. Some persons think they have the direct line from the apostles running right at their feet, and others believe that those who make the greatest boast about it have the least claim to it. There are clergymen who imagine that because they happen to be in a church which is in open alliance with the state, they must necessarily be ministers of the church of which Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Now *we* think that their union with the state is in itself a conclusive reply to all such claims to apostolic succession; and moreover, we remark many fatal points of difference between the apostles and their professed successors. Whenever did Peter or Paul become state-paid ministers? In what state church did they enroll themselves? What tithes did they receive? What rates did they levy? What laws did they make upon the Jews and the Gentiles? Were they rectors or vicars, prebendaries or deans, canons or curates? Did they buy their livings in the market? Did they sit in the Roman House of Lords dressed in lawn sleeves? Were they styled Right Reverend Fathers in God? Were they appointed by the Prime Minister of the day? Did they put on gowns, and read prayers out of a book? Did they christen children, and call them regenerate, and bury wicked reprobates in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection? As opposite as light is from darkness were those apostles from the men who pretend to be their divinely-appointed successors! When will men cease to thrust their arrogant pretences into our faces? Only when the common sense, to say nothing of the religion of our country, shall have rebuked their presumption!

One thing is clear from this "Apostle's Creed" which we have before us—*it is clear that the apostles did not believe in ritualism.* Peter—why, they make him out to be the head of the church! Do they not say that he was the first pope, and so on? I am sure if Peter were here he would grow very angry with them for slandering him so scandalously, for in his epistle he expressly warned others against being lords over God's heritage, and you may be sure he did not fall into that sin himself. When he is asked for his confession of faith, he stands up and declares that he believes in salvation by divine grace alone. "We believe." O bold apostle, what do you believe? Now we still hear it. Peter will say, "We believe in circumcision; we believe in regeneration by baptism; we believe in the sacramental efficacy of the Lord's Supper; we believe in pompous ceremonies; we believe in priests, and altars, and robes, and rubrics!" No; he does not utter a syllable concerning anything of the kind. He says, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we who have been circumcised shall be saved, just like those who have not been circumcised; we believe that we shall be saved, even as they." He makes very little, it seems, of ceremonies in the matter of salvation. He takes care that no idea of sacramentarianism shall mar his explicit confession of faith; he glories in no rite, and rests in no ordinance. All his testimony is concerning the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says nothing what-

ever about ordinances, ceremonies, apostolic gifts, or prelate unction—his theme is GRACE, and GRACE alone; and those, my brothers and sisters, are the true successors of the apostles who teach you that you are to be saved through the unmerited favor and free mercy of God, agreeing with Peter in their testimony, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved." These are the men who preach to you the gospel of salvation through the blood and righteousness of Jesus; but those pretended ministers who boast of their priesthood, preach another gospel, "which is not another; but there are some that trouble you." Upon their heads shall be the blood of deluded souls. They profess to regenerate others, but they will perish themselves; they talk of sacramental grace, and shall receive eternal destruction! Woe unto them, for they are deceivers and liars! May the Lord deliver this land from their superstitions!

Another thing is very clear here. The apostle *did not believe in self-righteousness.* The creed of the world is, "Do your best and it will be all right with you." To question this is treason against the pride of human nature, which evermore clings to salvation by its own merits. Every man is born a Pharisee. Self-confidence is bred in the bones—and will come out in the flesh. "What?" says a man, "do you not believe that if a man does his best, he will fare well in the next world? Why, you know, we must all live as well as we can, every man according to his own light; and if every man follows out his own conscience, as near as may be, surely it will be well with us?" That is not what Peter said. Peter did not say, "We believe that through doing our best, we shall be saved like other people." He did not even say, "We believe that if we act according to our light, God will accept that little light for what it was." No, the apostle strikes out quite another track, and solemnly affirms, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved," not through our good works, not through anything that we do, not by the merit of anything which we feel or perform, or promise to perform, but by grace, that is to say, by the free favor of God—

"Perish each thought of human pride,
Let God alone be magnified."

We believe that if we are ever saved at all, we must be saved gratis—saved as the gratuitous act of a bountiful God—saved by a gift, not by wages—saved by God's love, not by our own doings or merits. This is the apostle's creed: salvation is all of divine grace from first to last, and the channel of that grace is the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved, and lived, and died, and rose again for our salvation. Those who preach mere morality, or set up any way except that of trusting in the grace of God through Christ Jesus, preach another gospel, and they shall be accursed, even though they preach it with an angel's eloquence. In the day when the Lord shall come to discern between the righteous and the wicked, their work, as wood, hay, and stubble, shall be burnt up; but those who preach salvation by grace through Jesus Christ, shall find that their

work, like gold, and silver, and precious stones, shall survive the fire, and great shall be their reward.

I think it is very clear, again, from the text *that the apostles did not believe in salvation by the natural force of free will.* I fail to detect a trace of the glorification of free will here. Peter puts it, "We believe that we shall be saved;" through what? Through our own unbiased will? Through the volitions of our own well-balanced nature? Not at all, sir; but, "we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved." He takes the crown from off the head of man in all respects, and gives all glory to the grace of God; he extols God, the gracious sovereign, who will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and who will have compassion upon whom He will have compassion. I wish I had a voice of thunder to proclaim in every street of London this glorious doctrine, "By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." This is the old reformation doctrine. This is the doctrine which will shake the very gates of hell, if it is but faithfully preached. O for an army of witnesses to publish abroad the gospel of grace in its sovereignty, Omnipotence, and fullness. If you are ever to get comfort, believe me, dear hearer, you must receive the doctrine of salvation by free grace into your soul as the delight and solace of your heart, for it is the living truth of the living God. Not by ritualism, not by good works, not by our own unaided free will are we saved, but by the grace of God alone.—

"Not for the works which we have done,
Or shall hereafter do,
Has God decreed on sinful worms
Salvation to bestow.
The glory, Lord, from first to last,
Is due to You alone:
Anything to ourselves we dare not take,
Or rob You of Your crown."

Were I now to take this apostle's creed to pieces, and look closely at the details of it, it would be easy to show that this creed contains within it many important truths of God. It implies, most evidently, the doctrine of *human ruin.* "We believe that we shall be *saved*." That statement assuredly implies that we need to be saved. The apostle Peter, as well as his brother apostle, Paul, was sound in the faith concerning the total depravity of human nature, he viewed man as a lost creature, needing to be saved by divine grace. He believed in those three great "r's" which Rowland Hill used to talk about—ruin, redemption, and regeneration. He saw most clearly man's ruin, or he would not have been so explicit upon man's salvation. If Peter were here to preach tonight, he would not tell us that man, though he is a little fallen, is still a noble creature, who needs only a little assistance, and he will be quite able to right himself. Oh, the fearful flattery which has been heard from some pulpits! Anointing corruption with the unction of hypocrisy; smearing the abomination of our depravity with sickening eulogies! Peter would give no countenance to

such false prophets. No, he would faithfully testify that man is *dead* in sin, and life's a gift; that man is lost, utterly fallen and undone. He speaks in his epistles of the former lusts of our ignorance, of our vain conversation received by tradition of our fathers, and of the corruption which is in the world through lust. In the verse before us, he tells us that the best of men, men such as himself and the other apostles, had need to be saved, and, consequently, they must have been originally among the lost, heirs of wrath even as others. I am sure that he was a firm believer in what are called *"the doctrines of grace,"* as he was certainly in his own person an illustrious trophy and everlasting monument of divine grace. What a ring there is in that word GRACE! Why, it does one good to speak it and to hear it; it is, indeed, "a charming sound, harmonious to the ear." When one feels the power of it, it is enough to make the soul leap out of the body for joy—

"Grace! How good, how cheap, how free,
Grace, how easy to be found!
Only let your misery
In the Savior's blood be drowned!"

How it suits a sinner! How it cheers a poor forlorn wanderer from God! Grace! Peter was not in a fog about this; his witness is clear as crystal, decisive as the sentence of a judge. He believed that salvation was of God's free favor, and God's almighty power; and he speaks out like a man, "We believe that we are saved by grace."

Our apostle was also most decided and explicit concerning *the atonement.* Cannot you see the atonement in the text, sparkling like a jewel in a well-made ring? We are saved "through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." What does the apostle mean but the grace which came streaming from those five wounds when the Savior hung on the cross? What does he mean but the grace which is revealed to us in the bleeding sufferer who took our sins, and carried our sorrows, that we might be delivered from wrath through Him? O that everyone were as clear about the atonement as Peter is! Peter had seen his Master; no, more, his Master had looked at him and broken his heart, and afterwards bound it up, and given him much grace; and now Peter is not content with saying, "We believe that we shall be saved through grace," but he is careful to word it, "We believe that we shall be saved *through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Dear hearers, never have any questions upon the vital point of redemption by blood. This is a fundamental truth of God; he who is in darkness upon this subject, has no light of God in him. What the sun is to the heavens, the doctrine of a vicarious satisfaction is to theology. Atonement is the brain and spinal cord of Christianity. Take away the cleansing blood, and what is left to the guilty? Deny the substitutionary work of Jesus, and you have denied all that is precious in the New Testament. Never never let us endure one wavering, doubtful thought upon this all-important truth of God.

It seems to me, too, that without straining the text, I might easily prove that Peter believed in the doctrine of *the final perseverance of the saints.* They were not, in a certain sense, it seems, perfectly saved when he spoke, but he says, "We believe we shall be saved." Well, but Peter, may you not fall away and perish? "No," he says, "we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *we shall be saved."* How positively he speaks of it! I do wish you, dear friends, to get a firm and intelligent hold of the doctrine of the safety of the believer, which is as clear as noonday in the Scriptures. Upon the whole you have learned it, and can defend it well, but all of you should be able to give a reason for the hope that is in you. I have known one of our people met by those who do not believe this doctrine, and they have said to him, "You will fall away; look at your own weakness and tendency to sin." "No," said the man, "I know I would if I were left to myself, but then Christ has promised that He will never leave me nor forsake me." Then it is sometimes said, "but you may be a believer in Christ today, and yet perish tomorrow;" but our friends generally reply, " Do not tell us that lie: God's saints shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of Jesus' hand; as for your doctrine of the final falling of the Lord's blood-bought ones, if that is the gospel, go and keep it to yourselves; as for us, we would not go two inches to listen to it; there is nothing in it to lay hold of; it is a bone without marrow; there is no strength, no comfort for the soul in it." If I know when I trust Christ that He will save me at the last, then I have something to rest upon, something worth living for, but if it is all a mere "if," or "but," or "maybe," or "perhaps," a little of myself, and a little of Christ, I am in a poor case, indeed! A gospel which proclaims an uncertain salvation is a miserable imposition; away with such a gospel, away with such a gospel; it is a dishonor to Christ; it is a discredit to God's people; it neither came from the Scriptures of truth, nor does it bring glory to God!

Thus, have I tried to open up the apostle's creed, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."

II. And now, having used the text as the apostle's confession of faith, I shall take it as THE CONVERTED MORAL MAN'S STATEMENT.

Let me show you what I mean. Observe and admire the way in which Peter puts the case. A company of Jews has assembled to discuss a certain matter, and some of them look very wise, and bring up certain suggestions that are rather significant. They say, "Well, perhaps these Gentile dogs may be saved; yes, Jesus Christ told us to go and preach the gospel to every creature; therefore, no doubt, He must have included these Gentile dogs—we do not like them, though, and must keep them as much under our rules and regulations as we can; we must compel them to be circumcised; we must have them brought under the full rigor of the law; we cannot excuse them from wearing the yoke of bondage." Presently, the apostle Peter gets up to speak, and you expect to hear him say—do you not?—to these gentlemen, "Why, these 'Gentile dogs,' as you call

them, can be saved, even as *you."* No; he adopts quite a different tone; he turns the tables, and he says to them, "We believe that you may be saved, even as they." It were just as if I should have a company of persons here now who had been very bad and wicked, who had plunged into the deepest sin, but God's grace has met with them and made them new creatures in Christ Jesus: there is a church meeting, and when these persons are brought before the church, suppose there were some of the members who should say, "Yes, we believe that a drunk may be saved, and a person who has been a harlot may, *perhaps*, be saved, too." But imagine, now, that I were to stand up and reply, "Now, my dear brothers and sisters, I believe that *you* may be saved even as *these!"* What a rebuke it would be! This is precisely what Peter meant. "Oh," he said, "do not raise the question about whether *they* can be saved—the question is whether *you*, who have raised such a question, will be saved." "We believe that, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they." So he seems, in this dispute, to take the objectors aback, and to put the Gentile believers first in order, to cast out the bad, proud, wicked, devilish spirit of self-righteousness.

Now, brothers and sisters, some of us were favored by providence with the great privilege of having Christian parents, and consequently we never did know a great deal of the open sin into which others have fallen. Some of us never were inside a theater in our lives, never saw a play, and do not know what it is like. There are some here who, perhaps, never did frequent the tavern, do not know a lascivious song, and never uttered an oath. This is cause for great thankfulness, very great thankfulness indeed; but, O you excellent moralists, mind you do not say in your heart, "We are quite sure to be saved," for, let me tell you, you have not before God any advantage over the outward transgressor, so as to entitle you to be saved in a less humbling manner. If you are ever saved, you will have to be saved in the same way as those who have been permitted to plunge into the most outrageous sin. Your being restrained from overt offenses is a favor for you to be grateful, but not a virtue for you to trust in. Ascribe it to God's providential goodness, but do not wrap it about you as though it were to be your wedding garment, for if you do, your self-righteousness will be more dangerous to you than some men's open sins are to them; for do you not know how the Savior put it, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." You moral people must be saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—saved *even as they,* the outcasts, the wanderers. You will not, you cannot be saved in any other way, and will not be saved at all if you do not submit to this way. You will not be permitted to enter heaven, good as you think yourselves to be, unless you come down to the terms and conditions which sovereign grace has laid down, namely, that you should trust Christ, and be saved by divine grace, "even as they."

To prove to you, dear friends, that this must be the case, I will suppose that you have picked out 20 people who have been good, in a moral

sense, from their youth up. Now, these people must be saved just the same as those other 20 over yonder, who have been as bad as bad can be from their earliest childhood, and I will tell you why—because these amiable persons fell in Adam just as surely as the outcasts did; they are as fully partakers of the curse of the fall as the profane and drunken; and they were born in sin and shaped in iniquity just as the dissolute and the dishonest were. There is no difference in the blood of humanity, it flows from one polluted source, and is tainted in all its channels. The depravity of human nature does not belong merely to those who are born in dirty back courts and alleys, but it is as certainly manifest in those of you who were born in the best parts of the city. You dwellers in Belgravia are as altogether born in sin as the denizens of Bethnal Green. The West End is as sensual as the East. Hyde Park has no natural superiority of nature over Seven Dials. The corruption of those born in the castle at Windsor is as deep as the depravity of workhouse children. You, ladies and gentlemen, are born with hearts as bad and as black as the poorest of the poor. You sons of Christian parents, do not imagine, because you spring of a godly ancestry, that therefore your nature is not polluted like the nature of others. In this respect, we are all alike; we are born in sin, and alike are we dead by nature in trespasses and sins, heirs of wrath, even as others. Remember, too, that although you may not have sinned openly, as others have done, yet in your hearts you have, and it is by your hearts that you will be judged; for how often a man may commit adultery in his heart, and incur the guilt of theft, while his hands lay idly by his side! Do you not know that a look may have in it the essence of an unclean act, and that a thought may commit murder as well as a hand? God takes note of heart sin as well as hand sin. If you have been outwardly moral, I am thankful for it, and I ask *you* to be thankful for it too; but do not trust in it for Justification, seeing that you must be saved, even as the worst of criminals are saved, because in heart, if not in life, you have been as bad as they.

Moreover the method of pardon is the same in all cases. If you moralists are to be washed, where must you find the purifying bath? I never heard of but one fountain, that—

"Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

That fountain is for the dying thief as much as for you, and for you as much as for him. There is a robe of righteousness that is to cover the best living among professors—that same robe of righteousness covered Saul of Tarsus, the bloody persecutor. If you, of unspotted outward character, are ever to have a robe of righteousness, you must wear the same one as he wore; there cannot be another, nor a better! O you who are conscious of outward innocence, do, *do,* humble yourselves at the foot of the cross, and come to Jesus just as empty-handed, just as broken-hearted as if you had been outwardly among the vilest of the vile, and through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be saved, even as

they. O may the Holy Spirit bring you to this. I do not know whether anybody here has ever fallen into such an unwise thought as I have known some entertain. I met with a case of this sort only the other day. A very excellent and amiable young woman, when converted to God, said to me, "You know, sir, I used to almost wish that I was one of those very bad sinners whom you so often speak to, and invited to come to Jesus, because I thought then I should feel my need more: that was my difficulty, I could not feel my need." But see, dear friends, we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we who have not plunged into black sin, shall be saved even as they who have done so. Do not make a difficulty about this. Others make a difficulty on the opposite side; they say, "Oh, I could trust Christ if I had been kept from sin!" The fact is, that you unbelieving souls will not trust Christ whichever way you have lived, for from some quarter or other, you will find cause for your doubts; but when the Lord the Spirit gives you faith, you big sinners will trust Christ quite as readily as those who have not been openly great offenders; and you who have been preserved from open sin will trust Him as joyfully as the great transgressors. O come, come, come, you sick souls; come to my Master! Do not say, "We would come if we were worse." Do not say, "We would come if we were better." But come as you are; come just as you are. Oh, if you are a sinner, Christ invites you! If you are but lost, remember Christ came to save the lost! Do not be picking out your case, and making it to be different from others, but come, and welcome! Weary and heavy laden sinner, come, and welcome! Come, even now!—

"Just as you are, without one trace
Of love, or joy, or inward grace,
Or meetness for the heavenly place,
O guilty sinner, come!
Come, here bring your boding fears,
Your aching heart, your bursting tears;
'Tis mercy's voice salutes your ears,
O trembling sinner, come!
The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come;'
Rejoicing saints re-echo, 'Come;'
Who faints, who thirsts, who will, may come—
Your Savior bids you come!"

III. The text would not be fairly treated if I did not use it as THE CONFESSION OF THE GREAT OUTWARD SINNER WHEN CONVERTED.

I will now speak to those here present who, before conversion, indulged in gross sins. Such are here. Glory be to God, such are here! They have been washed; they have been cleansed. My dear brothers and sisters, I can rejoice over you; more precious are you by far in my eyes than all the precious gems which kings delight to wear, for you are my eternal joy and crown of rejoicing. You have experienced a divine change; you are not what you once were; you are new creatures in Christ Jesus. Now, I will speak for you. "*We* believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." What do we mean? Why, we be-

lieve that we shall be saved even as the best are saved. I will split that thought up, as it were, into individual instances. Yonder sits a very poor believer. We are very glad to see him at the Tabernacle. I know he had a thought that his clothes were hardly good enough to come in, but I hope none of you will ever stay away because of your clothes. Come, come anyhow; we are always glad to see you, at least, I am, if others are not. But my poor friend is very badly off indeed; he would not like anybody perhaps to see the room where he lives. Yes, but my dear brother, do you expect to have a poor man's salvation? Do you expect that when you get to heaven, you will be placed in a corner as a pauper pensioner? Do you think that Jesus Christ will only give you the crumbs which fall from off His table? "Oh, no!" I think I hear you say, "Oh, no! We shall leave our poverty when we get to glory." Some of our friends are rich. They have an abundance of this world's goods, and we rejoice to think they have, and hope that they will have grace to make a proper use of this mercy; but we poor people believe that we shall be saved, even as they. We do not believe that our poverty will make any difference to our share in divine grace, but that we shall be as much loved of God as they are, as much blessed in our poverty as they are in their riches, and as much enabled by divine grace to glorify God in our sphere as they are in theirs. We do not envy them, but on the contrary, ask grace from God that we may feel that if we are poor in pocket, yet we are rich in faith, and shall be saved, even as they.

Others of you are not so much poor in money as you are poor in useful talent. You come up to Chapel, and fill your seat, and that is about all you can do. You drop your weekly offering into the box, and when that is done, you have done all, or nearly all in your power. You cannot preach; you could not conduct a prayer meeting; you have hardly courage enough to give away a tract. Well, my dear friend, you are one of the timid ones, one of the little Benjamins of whom there are many. Now, do you expect that the Lord Jesus Christ will give you a second-hand robe to wear at His wedding feast? And when you sit at the banquet, do you think He will serve you from cold and inferior dishes? "Oh, no!" you say; "Oh, no! Some of our brothers and sisters have great talents, and we are glad that they have; we rejoice in their talents, but we believe that we shall be saved, even as they: we do not think that there will be any difference made in the divine distribution of loving-kindness because of our degree of ability." There are very proper distinctions here on earth between rich and poor, and between those who are learned and those who are unlearned; but we believe that there is no distinction in the matter of salvation—we shall be saved, even as they. Many of you would preach 10 times better than I do if you could only get your tongues unloosed to say what you feel. Oh, what red-hot sermons you would preach, and how earnest you would be in their delivery! Now, that sermon which you did not preach, and could not preach, shall not be set down to your account, while perhaps that discourse of mine will be a failure because I may not

have preached it as I should have done, with pure motives and zealous spirit. God knows what you would do if you could, and He judges not so much according to what you do, as according to your will to do it. He takes in this case, the will for the deed, and you shall be saved, even as they who with the tongue of fire proclaim the truths of God.

Most likely there is some doubting brother here. Whenever he opens "Our Own Hymn Book," he very seldom looks to "The Golden Book of Communion," but he generally turns to hymn No. 590, or thereabouts, and begins to sing "Contrite Cries." Well, my dear friend, you are a weakling; you are Mr. Much-Afraid, or Mr. Little-Faith; but how is your heart? What are your prospects? Do you believe that you will be put off with a second-rate salvation, that you will be admitted by the back door into heaven instead of through the gate of pearl? "Oh no!" you say; "I am the weakest lamb in Jesus' fold, but I believe that I shall be saved, even as they; that is, even as they who are the strongest in grace, most useful in labor, and most mighty in faith." In a few hours, dear friends, I shall be crossing the sea, and I will suppose that there shall be a good stiff wind, and that the vessel may be driven out of her course, and be in danger. As I walk the deck, I see a poor girl on board; she is very weak and ill, quite a contrast to that fine strong, burly passenger who is standing beside her, apparently enjoying the salt spray and the rough wind. Now, suppose a storm should come on—which of these two is the more safe? Well, I cannot see any difference, because if the ship goes to the bottom, they will both go, and if the ship gets to the other side of the channel, they will both land in security. The safety is equal when the thing upon which it depends is the same. So, if the weakest Christian is in the boat of salvation—that is, if he trusts Christ—he is as safe as the strongest Christian; because, if Christ failed the weak one, He would fail the strong one, too. Why, if the least Christian who believes in Jesus does not get to heaven, then Peter himself will not get to heaven! I am sure of it, that if the smallest star which Christ ever kindled does not blaze in eternity, then neither will the brightest star! If you who have given yourselves to Jesus should any of you be cast away, this would prove that Jesus is not able to save, and then all of us must be cast away too. Oh, yes! "We believe that we shall be saved, even as they."

I am nearly done, but I will suppose for a moment that there has been a work of grace in a prison—Cold Bath Fields, if you like. There are half-a-dozen villains there, thorough villains; but the grace of God has made new men of them. I think I see them; and, if they understood the text, as they looked across the room, and saw half a dozen apostles—Peter, James, John, Matthew, Paul, Bartholomew, and so on—they might say, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they, even as those apostles are." Can you catch the idea, and make it your own? When artists have drawn pictures of the apostles, they have often put a halo round their heads, very much like a brass pan, or something of that kind, as if to signify that they were some par-

ticular and special saints; but there was no such halo there—the painter is far from the fact; we say it, and say it seriously and thoughtfully, that 12 souls picked from the scum of creation who look to Christ, shall be saved, even as the 12 apostles are saved; halo or no halo, they shall join in the same hallelujah to God and the Lamb!

I will select three holy women: they shall be the three Marys that we read about in the Evangelists, the three Marys whom Jesus loved, and who loved Jesus. These holy women, we believe, will be saved. But I will suppose that I go to one of our Refuges, and there are three girls there who were once of evil fame: the grace of God has met with them, and they are now three weeping Magdalenes, penitent for sin. These three might say, humbly, but positively, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we three reclaimed harlots shall be saved, even as they—the three holy matrons who lived near Christ and were His delight." "Ah, well," says one, "this is divine grace, indeed! This is plain speech and wonderful doctrine, that God should make no distinction between one sinner and another when we come to Him through Christ." Dear hearer if you have understood this very simple statement, go to Jesus at once with your soul, and may God enable you to obtain complete salvation at this hour. I pray you to come in faith to the cross—I pray my Master's grace to compel you to enter into a state of full dependence upon Jesus, and so into a state of salvation. If you are now led to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter how black the past may have been, "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin."—

"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."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 8:23-38 AND 16,

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE GREAT ATTRACTION
NO. 775

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 13, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."
John 12:32.

THE death of our Lord Jesus Christ must have appeared to His apostles to be an unmitigated misfortune. No doubt they conceived that it would be the death of the cause, a heavy blow, and a deep discouragement. Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered. Strike the head, and what shall become of the members? But our Lord instructed His disciples that this which seemed so dreary a circumstance was really the most hopeful of all the points of His history. He assured them that by His death He would totally defeat the powers of darkness. "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." He comforted them yet further by the declaration that His crucifixion, instead of driving men away from His doctrine, would give to that doctrine a peculiar luster and a special charm. The cross of Christ, with all its ignominy and shame, is no hindrance to His heavenly teaching; but is, in fact, a matchless loadstone by which men are attracted to it. There is such a thing as "the offense of the cross," and that offense has not ceased; but listen to the Master's words, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." The attractive power of the gospel lies mainly in the crucifixion of the gospel's great teacher.

The text needs, perhaps, to be illustrated by doctrines which lie concealed within itself, and by facts with which it is connected. The prince of darkness had drawn away the sons of men by the fascination of flesh-pleasing errors, flattering delusions, alluring pleasures, glittering pomp, and outward show; by these he drew all men unto him. The devil led men captive at his will, seducing them from bad to worse. He enticed poor foolish man to his own destruction, as fish are taken by the bait, as birds are lured by decoys, and as ships are wrecked by false lights. An enormous whirlpool of evil had for many an age sucked into its vortex multitudes who were sailing upon the sea of life: all over the ocean of society the influence of this monstrous whirlpool of evil was felt, more or less powerfully, so that those who escaped from its horrible depths were, nevertheless, much impeded and diverted in their course, and found it hard to reach the desired haven; even up to the very mouth of the port of peace, the power of this great whirlpool was evidently felt, drawing all men as it could. Now, the Lord Jesus came into the world to produce a

counter-attraction, to set in motion a counter-current. Lo, I saw in vision, a mysterious hand reaching out of a mighty all-attracting magnet from the sky, of so marvelous a power that vessels which were being whirled towards their destruction, were many of them suddenly diverted in their course, and drawn at once to the magnet and to safety, while others, which did not feel its power to the same saving extent, and became ultimately victims to evil, were nevertheless slowed in their course for a while, hindered in their desperate course, and prevented from perishing so hastily as they would have done.

Alas, many of them tugged at the oar, or hoisted all sail to escape from the magnet; and so, as they willfully destroyed themselves, they did sad despite to their conscience, and perished the more miserably because they despised the great salvation. Just as evil draws all of us more or less, so Jesus Christ more or less draws all men who hear the gospel. Some men He draws unto Himself by the effectual drawings of His divine grace; these are the "all" here meant—some of all classes, the all for whom he shed His blood; but where His name is preached, even those who do not believe in Him, feel some of the influence which Christianity spreads abroad throughout society: His name leavens the lump; the sweet perfume of His spikenard fills all the house where He is sitting; *bent upon instituting the new and heavenly attraction which should overcome the powers of evil, our Lord Jesus came into this world* to be lifted up from the earth, not for Himself, but for the sins of others. Down from the heights of glory He descended, moved by disinterested love; not that He had anything to gain, but that He might redeem us from our iniquity, and save us from our fearful perils. On the cross He effected the redemption of His people. Nailed there in ignominy, in pain, desertion and death, He worked out redemption for His chosen. *But men stood at a distance* from their best friend. That is implied in the text. Why should they need to be drawn to Jesus, if they were already near to Him? Some stood so far away from the dying Savior that they made His death the subject of mockery, and even found subjects for jest in His dying groans and pangs. All of us were alienated from God and from Christ, who is God's express image. Our evil hearts had piled great mountains between us and the Lord Jesus Christ. By nature we do not appreciate His love; we do not render to Him the gratitude which He deserves; but we pass by as though it were nothing to us that Jesus should die.

Moreover, since *man does not come of himself,* even when he perceives the gracious errand of the Lord Jesus, our heavenly friend condescends to draw him. The truth of God is latent in the text—that men not only are at a distance, but that they will not come to Christ of themselves. The Lord never does unnecessary work; we would never hear of Christ's drawing us if we could run without drawing; but the fact is that we stand away from Christ, and love the distance; yes, we make the gulf still wider, developing our original hatred to that which is good, by adding the force of habit to our original depravity. Therefore, since men are at a dis-

tance and will not come, *the crucified Savior becomes Himself the attraction to men.* He casts out from Himself bands of love and cords of gracious constraint, and binding these around human hearts, He draws them to Himself by an invincible constraint of divine grace. sinners by nature will not come to Jesus, though His charms might even attract the blind, and awaken the dead. They will not melt, though surely such beauties might dissolve the adamant, and kindle affection in rocks of ice. But Jesus has a wondrous power about Him to woo and win the sons of men. As out of His mouth goes a two-edged sword, so out of His heart proceed chains of gold by which He binds thousands of willing captives to Himself. This attraction, according to the text, is to be found operating upon all classes, nations, ranks, and characters of men; it is not to be excluded from remote lands, or dens of infamy nearer home. Here and there kings and princes have believingly yielded to its power, while multitudes of the poor have had the gospel preached to them, and have received it in the love of it. I trust there are many of us here; belonging as we do to different grades and classes of society, who can verify the truth of this text, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw *all* men unto Me." The young, the old, the rich, the poor, the intellectual, the learned, and the ignorant, some of all sorts does Jesus draw, and thus He earns to Himself the glory of being the universal attraction, the attraction to which all hearts must yield when He draws effectually by His grace.

Having thus skimmed over the text, and endeavored to bring before you the thoughts which it kindles, we shall now speak upon *what it is in the cross which becomes attractive to men:* and, secondly, we shall have a word to say *concerning the direction in which Christ crucified draws;* and then, thirdly, *with what power He draws.*

I. First, dear friends, WHAT IS THE ATTRACTION OF JESUS CRUCIFIED?

It is asserted by our Savior that when lifted up from the earth, He would draw all men: He intended by this His crucifixion; for John tells us in the 33rd verse, "This He said signifying what death He should die." Let it not be forgotten then that the power of the gospel lies in that which certain persons count to be its weakness and reproach. Christ dying for sinners is the great attraction of Christianity. Certain preachers have missed all in forgetting this. What is Socinianism but an attempt to have Christ without His cross? Those who sat around the cross, and said, "Let Him come down from the cross and we will believe Him," were the true ancestors of modern Unitarians who respect the character of our Lord, and highly esteem Him as a teacher, but reject Him utterly as a substitute, an atonement, and a sacrifice for sin. They fondly dream that if they teach His holy life without His ignominious death, men will be attracted to Him. Such has not proved to be the case. "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" is true, and shall be true; but Christ merely as a wise teacher, and an eminent example, has not drawn the sons of men, who are too far fallen to be charmed into holiness by a mere

exhibition of moral excellence, however perfect. Men need not so much a portrait of a man in health as medicine to remove their own diseases. It has been thought by some of late, that the proper way to draw men to the gospel is to preach the *future* glory of Christ. This, indeed, is to be preached in its correct place, for every part of divine truth should hold its position in the gospel harmony; but it is all a mistake, and a very great and terrible mistake, too, for men to put the glorified Savior into the place of the crucified Savior. You may preach the millennium; you may extol as much as you will the magnificence of those happy days, when He shall reign from the river even to the ends of the earth; but you will never make men Christians that way. I have heard it said that the Jews will be converted to Christianity by the doctrine of the second coming, since the second advent is to us precisely what they think the first advent should be. But it is not so, beloved, the only effectual attraction lies where the texts puts it, *"I, if I am lifted up."* The Savior crucified draws the Jew as well as the Gentile: the sons of Israel shall not be converted by the doctrine of a glorified Savior, but by the Man of Sorrows, who was despised and rejected of men—the Messiah, who was cut off, but not for Himself—the sacrifice offered outside the gate.

And why is this supreme attraction of the cross? I answer that by the power of the Holy Spirit many have been drawn to Christ by the disinterested love which His death manifests. Does that man on yonder tree die without the necessity of death; out of pure love—out of pure love to those who hated Him; out of love to the very men who fastened Him to the cruel wood? Had He nothing to gain? Was it charity in all its perfection—nothing but the milk-white lily of love? Was there nothing else but charity that could bind Him to the tree? Nothing! "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich." "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Many a heart has been so charmed with this, that it has run to Christ, drawn by the silken bonds of His love. Do not some of you feel as if you could love the dear Lover of souls this morning? Do not even my feeble descriptions of His Godlike work entice you? Oh, do you not feel that you must love one who loved so truly when there was no benefit for Him to receive in return? Why, I have thought that if Jesus had never died for *me*, I must yet love Him for having died for others; and if I had no share in the benefits which His passion procured, yet I have sometimes felt as if, out of admiration for "love so amazing, so divine," I must give my heart to Him. Here is one major attraction of the Crucified One.

Others have doubtless been brought to the Savior's feet by delight in *the satisfaction which is rendered to justice by the Redeemer's death.* Many men reason thus with themselves. Conscience is uneasy: offense has been committed against God: now, in the nature of things, under all

law that is at all respected, there must be punishment for offenses; but how shall the exercise of the prerogative of mercy be rendered perfectly consistent with the fulfillment of the penalty? Yonder bleeding Savior solves the difficulty. He dies, "The just for the unjust, that He may bring us to God." "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." Many men, finding their conscience rendered perfectly at ease when they have come to lean themselves upon the fact that Christ died for sinners, have been so enamored of that glorious truth of God, that the attraction has bound them to the cross forever. I must confess that this is one of the great considerations which, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, will keep me a Christian, as well as make me more and more in love with my Lord. I see not where else justice can meet with mercy and embrace; I know not where else righteousness and Peace can kiss each other, except on the cross where my Master gave up His life for transgressors. There I see the riddle all solved—fallen man brought back to God, and God, justly incensed at man's offense, able to display His love without in any way tarnishing His unsullied justice, or even diminishing the severity thereof. O my hearers, this is a blessed attraction, indeed: I would to God that it would attract some of you! O that the thought that your sin can thus be justly forgiven—that there is "No condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," since Christ was condemned in their place, may draw full many of you to Himself!

Many others have been drawn to the gospel by a sense of *the exact suitability of the atonement of Christ to the necessities of their condition.* As the glove fits the hand, so does the crucified Savior suit the necessities of a sinner. Here is exactly what the man needs. He feels himself guilty; he dreads the punishment of his transgression; his conscience, like an adder, stings him; like a fire ever fed with fresh fuel, it blazes within him; but when he meets with Christ, he meets with peace, and he says within himself, "This is precisely what I require. Thirsty, here is living water; naked, here is a robe of righteousness; vile, here is an open fountain; lost and undone, here is One who came to seek and to save that which was lost." Ah, I beseech my Lord to make all of you feel your condition, and then you will set a high price upon my Lord. Some of you imagine that you are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; may you feel your deep necessities before God; may you see how spiritual the law of God is, so that it touches your thoughts, and your words, and condemns you as much for these as for outward acts of sin: and when you once feel your sinnership, sweet will the Savior's name be in your ears, and you will be drawn to the cross, because the crucified Savior is all that you need.

Further, thousands upon thousands have been effectually drawn to Christ by seeing *how graciously, how readily, how wondrously, how abundantly, He pardons as He hangs upon the tree.* I cannot understand pardon as coming directly from God apart from a Mediator. Jehovah, the judge of all the earth, is too high, too terrible, too glorious in holiness, for

sinners to deal with Him absolutely. Our God is a consuming fire. When He descends on Sinai, the mountain smokes and melts as wax. Behold, the whole earth trembles at His presence, the pillars thereof are dissolved! Before Him goes the pestilence; at His feet are coals of fire; as He rides upon the wings of the wind, He scatters from His pavilion of clouds and darkness, hailstones and coals of fire. As for His voice, it is thunder, and the flash of His eyes are lightning. Who can receive pardon from an absolute God? He is great and terrible, and will by no means clear the guilty. But when I see God in Christ, and know that "in Him"—that man who died upon the cross—"dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," I can come to Him without fear, and with holy joy I can seek for and receive perfect pardon; from that bleeding hand I dare expect pardon; I am bold to look for great pardon from so great a Savior suffering so greatly. When I hear Him say to the dying thief, "Today shall you be with Me in paradise," I can hopefully sing—

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away!"

It becomes easy for the soul to understand how sin can be forgiven when it sees how sin has been avenged in the person of Jesus. O sinners, my Lord Jesus is able to forgive all manner of sins. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "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." How blessed to hear these words preached from that unrivalled pulpit, the cross! How sweet to hear the dying lips proclaim abounding mercy! How consoling to hear Him speak of the riches of divine grace who said, "I thirst," and "Lama sabacthani!" Oh, this is to be attracted indeed! This wondrous pardoning power of the crucified Redeemer is one of the master attractions of the cross!

But I must not enlarge. One more particular must suffice. Have not many of us been wonderfully drawn to the gospel by *the intense griefs and agonies of Jesus?* Beloved, when we see men in prosperity, it is natural for us to envy; but it is equally natural for us to pity those who are suffering—and love is in the next degree to pity. So I doubt not that when we have set forth Christ Jesus evidently crucified among you, the gracious Spirit has moved many tender hearts first to pity, and afterwards to *love* the bleeding Lamb. What a melting power there is in Gethsemane! Can you view the bloody drops of sweat, as they fall upon the frozen soil, and not feel that, in some degree, invisible but irresistible cords are drawing you to Jesus? Can you see Him flagellated in Pilate's hall, every thong of the scourge tearing the flesh from His shoulders? Can you see Him as they spit into His lovely face, and mar His blessed visage, and not feel as if you would gladly fall down and kiss His feet, and make yourself

forever His servant? And lastly, can you behold Him hanging upon the hill of Golgotha to die—can you mark Him as His soul is there overwhelmed with the wrath of God, with the bitterness of sin, and with a sense of utter desertion—can you sit down and watch Him there and not be attracted to Him? Ah, I wish that more of you would feel so attracted that you could resist no longer, but would come at once and give yourselves up to Him! You may not feel that you could kiss the King upon His throne, but will you not kiss the King upon His cross? You may revolt from Him when He wields a rod of iron, but will you not touch the silver scepter held in the bloodstained hands which bled for His enemies? O come here, sons and daughters of men, and yield yourself to sorrow's Lord! Daughters of Jerusalem, come here as of old, and weep both for Him and for yourselves; O seek a portion in His sin-atoning death, a place in heaven which His resurrection has opened!

Before I leave this point, I must observe, dear friends, that it renders my soul very great comfort to think that the attractive power in my crucified Lord does not lie in the eloquence of those who preach, nor in the logic and power of persuasion of those who proclaim His gospel. Ah, poor fools that we are, when we preach we sometimes think souls must be saved because we are fluent; and at another time, we suppose no good will be done because we spoke in great mental bondage; but, it is not the man who tells the story, nor the style in which he tells it; it is the tale itself which wins, under God the Holy Spirit! There is in the cross *itself* a power. The Holy Spirit rests like a dove upon that blood-stained tree, and through Him saving grace comes streaming down to human hearts. It is not of man, neither by man, for the attractions of Jesus crucified are as a dew from the Lord, which tarries not for man, neither waits for the sons of men.

II. We proceed to inquire in WHAT DIRECTION DOES THE CROSS ATTRACT?

In one word—it attracts towards everything that is good and blessed. No man was ever enticed to evil by a crucified Savior. The emotions which are properly excited in the soul by the doctrine of the atonement must always be towards goodness. The preaching of the cross does no mischief. Its sacred stream bears no man towards the rock of ruin; but its tendencies are everywhere and at all times towards man's best and happiest estate.

Let us observe that the cross of Christ draws men *from despair to hope.* Many have been ready to die of despair, because they have said, "There is no salvation for me." To such as these the first beam of hope has come through a crucified Savior: they have stumbled upon that precious soul-saving text, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses from all sin," and have been set at liberty. That text has opened the gate of heaven to many hundreds, and I do not doubt it will to thousands more. They have seen how Jesus' suffering put aside the necessity of our suffering for sin; and peace at once has bedewed the soul. It is no mean

thing to draw men away from despair, for despair is the root of many sins. When a man says, "There is no hope," then he hunts after sin like an eager hound after his game. To teach a man that there is hope—that there is hope for him—is to give him a fair breeze heavenward. This, Jesus crucified presents this to anxious souls.

It attracts men, in the next place, *from fear to faith.* They have been accustomed to think of God with trembling, and to be constantly alarmed at His presence. Sin has become a burden, but they have not known how to be delivered from it, and have feared that they must bear it forever: but the Savior lifted up upon the cross inspires faith. We think of Him, and as we think we believe. We meditate, and as we meditate we trust. Confidence comes in by the way of Calvary. The means of creating faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is the cross itself. God works faith in us, but it is through His dying Son. That was a terrible scene in Edinburgh when those lofty houses were filled with occupants who were unable to escape from the smothering smoke, and from the spreading fire. Suppose a fire escape could have been brought to the rescue, yet there is one thing the fire escape could not have done. If these poor creatures had been too faint and stifled to get out of the windows, it could not have lifted them onto itself; and yet that would have been one of the things required for their rescue. But this the gospel of Jesus does. It not only comes to men and says, "Now I will save you, if you will get into Me," but it takes hold of a man and puts him into itself; for Jesus Christ attracts men to Himself—not only comes near enough to them for them to grasp Him, but, as the magnet does with the iron, so Jesus lays hold on sinners' hearts.

Jesus crucified conducts the man *from dread to love.* Before God he stood shivering like a slave, crying, "How shall I escape from His presence? O that I had the wings of the morning, that I might fly even to the uttermost parts of the sea, or dive beneath hell's darkest wave, that I might hide from the yet more terrible hell of the glance of God's fiery eyes!" But when he sees God reconciled in Jesus, then the sinner sings—

"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."

In this way the soul is led to love God. "We love Him because He first loved us."

Then the attractions of the cross bring us up *from sin to obedience*. When we are washed in the precious blood, we feel grateful to our Lord Jesus, and we cannot live to sin. We are dead to it. We cannot any longer take pleasure in that which cost Him His life. It is impossible for us to count that sweet which we know was bitterness to Him. "What will You

have me to do?" becomes the question. We submit ourselves with our whole heart to His gracious sway, and to run in the way of His commandments becomes our soul's delight.

Thus we are led constantly also by the cross *from self to Jesus.* Nothing will kill self like a sight of the crucified. Lift up the Savior and down self must go. High thoughts of Christ are always attended by low thoughts of self and *vice versa.* Think much of yourself, you will think little of the Savior; but a very low esteem of our own merit brings a very high esteem of the merits of Christ; and it is a blessed thing when self is wholly beaten down. It is a victory which altogether is not won by us, I fear, till we lay down our bodies; but if anything can hang up King Self upon the tree until the evening, it is a sight of the tree upon which the Savior bled.

Finally the uplifted Redeemer draws us away *from earth to heaven.* Earth holds us fast: we cannot escape from its hold; but we feel a heavenward drawing. It is Jesus Christ who is drawing us; that same Christ who has gone up to the throne after having trod the winepress. He daily attracts us upward to Himself. Do you not feel His drawing? Oh, I think you do! When the boy's kite goes up very high into the air, and gets into the clouds, he cannot see it. Yet he declares, "It is there." Why? "Why," he asks, "I can feel its pull." And we know the Lord Jesus Christ is there—He who was crucified, for we can feel Him pull; we can feel Him draw. O that we could give ourselves wholly up to Him, and mount towards Him! I trust we have experienced some of that mounting, for He has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places" in Him. We know what the resurrection-life means. We do not forever grovel in worldly cares and carnal thoughts, but sometimes at least we get up into the higher atmosphere, and have near and dear communion with the Well-beloved. O Savior, draw us more and more!

We return to inquire with what order of power does the Savior lifted up draw men? What are the characteristics and qualities of this power? In brief, first of all, the power with which Christ draws us is, according to the text, a very *gentle* power. "I, if I am lifted up, will *draw* all men." Drawing is very different from *driving*. The way by which Jesus leads His followers is by soft, gentle influences. "I will *draw* men." The law of God is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; and the preaching of the terrors of the law are very useful in their way; but whenever a sinner really comes to Christ, the last action is never a drive—it is always a draw. The dove may have been driven part of the way to the ark by the wind, but the last act of getting into the ark was when Noah put out his hand and pulled the dove into the ark. The real act which brings us into connection with Christ is always a drawing act—an act of gentleness. Every converted man may say, when he is converted, "Your Gentleness has made me great." The heathen pictures one of their goddesses in her chariot drawn by doves. Surely it is by doves that we are drawn in the chariot of the gospel, towards the Lord Jesus! How very gentle, though all but omnipo-

tent, is the influence of the sun upon the earth and all the planets! How they constantly revolve around and follow him in his wondrous march—yet you never feel that he draws! If you harness a horse to your chariot, he tugs and pulls by fits and starts; but the father of lights draws all the ponderous planets along their appointed ways, and yet there is not enough of a jar to shake an aphid from a rosebud. So there is no noise in the loving drawing of the Savior. Much of the fanaticism which comes with religious excitements is not of God. The genuine dew of heaven falls calmly—

"As in soft silence vernal showers
Fall to refresh the fields and flowers,
So in sweet silence from above
Drops the sweet influence of His love."

Christ's drawings are gentle.

In the next place, observe that Christ's drawings are *gracious;* for is it not of grace that He should draw at all? If any of you were about to give away bread to the poor, and they would not come for it, I think you would say, "Let them go without it." You would not attempt to bring them to the feast. No, you would say, "It is good enough on my part to be ready to help them; but if they will not come, then let their starving be upon their own heads." But see what Jesus does! He does not throw a life belt to poor drowning men. Yes, He does; but He does more, for this life belt has the wonderful quality of attracting the man unto itself; so, that though at first he might be unwilling to be rescued, this mystic life belt changes his will so that he is willing to be saved.

But, next, Jesus draws with a *widespread power.* "I will draw *all men* unto Me." Not *every man.* Every man is not effectually drawn, for millions of men never heard the name of Jesus Christ at all; but *men of all sorts*—"all men," that is, Jews and Gentiles. It is an "all" signifying all sorts of men. And what a wonderful thing it is that the cross of Christ does draw all men! Many thought it never could draw the "roughs," the harlots, the street Arabs; but there have been found for Christ some of His mightiest trophies among the lowest of the low. Nor should we think that the cross cannot attract the rich, and that it is of little use putting the gospel before the fashionable classes. Ah, do not tell us this! There is a boundless power in the cross of Christ. If we preach it to kings and princes, we need not be ashamed. If we could have a parliament of men who were as bad as devils, as proud as Pharaoh, and as furious as Saul of Tarsus, if we preached Christ crucified to them, it would not be in vain! This attraction has, in the fourth place, an *effectual power*, for Jesus Christ in His own elect ones draws most effectually. I said, very gently, but none the less mightily because of the gentleness. The swallows fly across the sea to distant lands. Did you ever feel the influence which attracts them? It is not perceptible by the most delicate of instruments, and yet how effectual it is. They cannot lag behind when the time has come. See how they twitter over the gables of our houses, and leave those neatly built habitations

beneath our eaves. Many a weary mile lies the goal of their pilgrimage across the sea; but there they go: a mysterious influence draws them; and He who thus draws the swallow to other lands, and guides it in its flight, draws men to the cross so that they never rest till they have left their haunts of sin, and come to live where Jesus Christ distributes peace.

I will add, for the comfort of some who are here, that Jesus Christ draws today with a *present power*. "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." That means that He is drawing them NOW! He does not say that He *will* sometimes, but He draws *now*. Oh, I know not whom He may be drawing, but I do trust He is drawing some of you! Here I stand with the gospel to preach to you, like one with a magnet in his hand. Now, do I know who are God's elect? I do not, but I shall soon find out. Are you not like a great heap of steel filings and ashes mixed together? I cannot separate you, neither need I put the filings on this side and ashes on the other; I have only to thrust in the magnet and the division will be effectually made. Jesus crucified is the great discriminator; His atonement is the great detector of God's elect. The gospel reveals the eternal purpose. If God intends to save you, you will fly to His dear Son. If you are left to perish, it will be because of your own willfulness in neglecting the Savior and turning your back upon the fountain which cleanses from all sin. Jesus draws today, and Jesus *will draw* still. Happy days are coming when He will draw more mightily, when they shall run to Him: even multitudes that knew Him not shall run to Him, because of the holy one of Israel who has magnified Him. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Dear Savior, this morning—

"Draw reluctant hearts,
To You let sinners fly,
And taste the bliss Your love imparts,
And drink and never die."

The lessons to be drawn from the whole we will give you in two or three words.

First, *to believers* working for Christ; learn from the text that if you would win souls, you must draw them rather than drive them. Very few people are bullied into heaven. The way to bring men to Jesus Christ is not by rough words, and dark looks, and continually warning them, but rather by gentle invitations; tenderly as a nurse with her child must we seek to win souls. In the second place, if we would win souls, Jesus Christ must be our great attraction. In the class in the Sunday school, visiting from house to house, or elsewhere, we must keep close to the text, and the text must be the cross. I must confess there is a very great sweetness to my soul in preaching about Christ. I hope it is never a weariness to preach any part of divine truth. But oh, it is delight itself to preach up the Master: then we have to deal with the kernel of the matter. When we preach Jesus Christ, oh, then we are not putting out the plates,

and the knives and the forks, for the feast—we are handing out the bread itself! Now we are not, as it were, working in the field at the hedging and the ditching, and the sowing, but we are gathering the golden sheaves, and bringing the harvest home. If we want a hundredfold harvest, we must sow seed which was steeped in the blood of Cavalry; and, dear friends, if you want to be drawn nearer to Christ yourselves, do not go to Moses to help you, but get to Christ. Go to Christ to get to Christ. "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men"—where?—*"unto Me."* Jesus draws to Himself! Remember, you have never experienced the fullness of the drawing unless you are *drawn to Christ.* If you are only drawn to holiness, or drawn to a church, or to good experiences, you have not obtained the fullness and soul of the matter. You must be drawn to Christ—right away from ordinances and everything else, till you get into His bosom. Then you will have found the *summum bonum,* then you will have reached that which Christ would have you obtain—that for which He died that you might obtain when He, on the cross was lifted up—that He might draw you *unto Himself.*

And now, *sinner*, if you would come to Jesus, let the text whisper a comfortable word in your ear. *He* must draw you! Think much upon His death. Turn this afternoon to those chapters in the evangelists where His death is recorded. Picture that dying Savior to yourself, and ask yourself, "Is this anything to me? Have I a share in it?" Then cover your face with your hands, and kneel down and cry, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner! Wash me in the precious blood." Before long you shall feel that the precious Christ has drawn you to Himself, and that you are saved! The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 12:1-36.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

A SONG AT THE WELLHEAD
NO. 776

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 10, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And from there they went to Beer; which is the well where the Lord said to Moses, 'Gather the people together, and I will give them water.' Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it—the princes dug the well, the nobles of the people dug it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves."
Numbers 21:16-18.

WE have remarked in our reading that the children of Israel were continually changing their places, and that there was usually a great difference between one station and the next. So, also, *we* are constantly varying in our experience, and the variations are sometimes exceedingly remarkable.

You observe, in the neighborhood of the text, that the people pitched their tents at one time by the brooks of Arnon. There appears to have been an exceedingly abundance of water where they then were, but nevertheless, they moved into the wilderness where there was not a single drop to quench their thirst. So is it with *us*. At one time we are abounding in every good thing, rejoicing "with joy unspeakable and full of glory"; and at another time we discover how great our weakness is; faith is at a very low ebb, and joy seems as though the frost of doubt had nipped its root. But, great as the changes of our experience certainly are, our necessities never change. Whether they found water or not, the people always needed water. The great camp must always have a supply, or perish for the lack of it. So, at all hours, and in all places, believers need the divine grace which only their Lord can give them. They carry no stores with them: they are daily dependent upon their God. "All my springs are in You," said David, and every heir of heaven must experimentally learn this truth of God.

Now, there is one thing certain, that although our experiences vary and our necessities remain the same, yet there is something that does not change, namely, *the supply which God has provided for our needs. Our* experience may be high or low, bright or dark, but JEHOVAH-JIREH is still the name of our God. In the mountain of the Lord it shall be seen, and in the valley too, that the Lord will provide. As our day so shall our strength be; if great our needs, great shall be our supplies. Israel found it so, for when they came to this particular place, where there was no natu-

ral water, they soon discovered a supernatural supply. They arrived at a spot that was all arid sand, but *that* was the very place of which God had spoken. "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." Believer, *your* supplies shall never vary, and your greatest necessities shall only illustrate the fullness of the Lord your God. Be not afraid, but go forward. Though it is dark and dreary in the prospect, yet if God bids you advance, tarry not, for He has surely taken care to provide your necessities when they arise.

The particular text before us has four things in it which I think may be instructive to us. These people needed supplies just as we need grace. There was, first, *a promise concerning the supply;* secondly, *there was a song;* that song viewed in another light, was, in the third place, *a prayer;* and when, this promise, song, and prayer, *were attended by the effort,* then the blessing came.

I. To begin, then, these people required water as we greatly need divine grace, and there was A PROMISE GIVEN CONCERNING THE SUPPLY. "The Lord said to Moses, 'Gather the people together, and I will give them water.'"

Beloved, *we* have a promise. A promise? No, a thousand promises! God's people were never in any plight whatever, but what there was a promise to meet that condition. There is not a single lock of which God has not the key. You shall never be placed in a difficulty without some provision being made for that difficulty, which God foresaw, and for which His heavenly wisdom had devised a way of escape.

Now, the supply promised here, *was a divine supply: "I* will give them water." Who else could satisfy those flocks and herds? By what mechanism, or by what human toil could all those multitudes of people have received enough to drink? *"I* will give them water." God can do it, and He will. Beloved, the supply of grace that you are to receive in your time of need is a divine supply. You are not to look to man for grace. God forbid that we should ever fall into the superstitions of some idiots, in these modern days, who suppose that God has given His grace only to bishops and to priests—the most graceless of all men if they profess to have any grace to give away—for if they had true grace at all they would not act after that fashion. If you want divine grace, beloved, you must go to God for it. You shall get it there, but nowhere else. As for even the ablest of God's sent ministers, they are but broken cisterns if we trust in them. They shall have grace enough to get to heaven themselves, but they will be to themselves great wonders when they arrive there. Wise virgins always say to the foolish ones who apply to them for oil, "Not so; lest there is not enough for us and you: but go you rather to them who sell, and buy for yourselves." There is a divine supply for you, Christian. Therefore, knowing the attributes of God, you will understand that however much you may require, there will be an all-sufficient supply; however

long you may require it, there will be an everlasting supply; at whatever hours you may need it, there will be an available supply. It is not possible for your needs to outlast that which will be treasured up for you. *"I* will give them water"; and, you thirsty ones, go and drink, for there is no fear of exhausting this wellhead.

As it was a divine supply, so, also, it was *a suitable one.* The people were thirsty, and the promise was. "I will give them *water."* At another time He had given them bread; He had also given them flesh to eat. But water was what they just now required, and water was what they received. We do not always get that form of grace which we think we need. We sometimes fancy that we require comfort, when rebuke would be much more healthful for us, and it is the rebuke which we obtain, and not the comfort. God is not to be dictated to by our whims and wishes. Like a father, He understands His children better than His children understand themselves, and He gives, not according to their foolish guesses of what they need, but according to His wise apprehension of what they require. "I will give them water." What do you need tonight? Go and lay open your needs before the Lord. Tell Him what it is you require, if you know, and then add to your prayer, "And what I know not that I need, yet give me, for You are able to do exceeding abundantly above all that I can ask or even think: not according to my apprehension of my necessities, but according to Your perception of my needs, deal with Your servant, O Lord, and grant me that which is most suitable to my case." "Gather the people together, and I will give them water."

Observe, too, that the supply promised was *an abundant supply.* The Lord did not mock the people by sending them just enough to moisten their tongues, but not to quench their thirst. We cannot be sure how many people there were, but it is probable, and almost certain, that there were nearly three million of them; and yet, when God said, "I will give them water," He did not say, "I will give some of them water: the princes shall have a supply, but the poorer ones must go without." Oh, not so! "I will give *them* water," included every child of Israel, every babe that needed it, as well as every strong man who thirsted after it. Do you hear this, child of God? "I will give them water." Whatever you need, you who are the most obscure in the world, you who have the least faith; you who stand in the back of the crowd, not able to push to the place where you hear that the water flows; here is provision for you. It shall be with divine grace as it was of old with the manna: there shall be enough for all who go out to gather it; he that gathers much shall have nothing over, and he that gathers little shall have no lack. There shall be—

"Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough forevermore."

No child of God shall be left to perish for lack of the necessary supplies. "I will give them water."

I may observe, once more, that it was a divine supply, a suitable supply, and an abundant supply, so also it was a *sure supply*. *"I will* give them water." It is not, "I may, perhaps, do it; possibly there shall be refreshment for them"; but, "I *will* give them water." Oh, the splendor of the Lord's "shalls" and "wills"! They never fail. "Has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" Search the Book of the Lord, and read and see if any of His Words have fallen to the ground, if one of His promises has lacked its mate! You will have to say, believer, as Joshua did, "There failed not anything of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass." We do not go forward upon the strength of "ifs," and "buts," and "perhapses"; but we advance confidently, invigorated and inflamed, as to our courage, by "wills" and "shalls." God must un-deify Himself before He can break His promises. He would lose His character, and that can never be! His honor is the bright jewel of His crown, and He will keep His promise to all His people. "I will give them water."

Now, I thought, as I was coming up to this house once again to have the unspeakable pleasure of addressing you, "What am I that there should be any supply for the people when they are gathered together?" And this text seemed to come to me, *you* "gather the people together, and *I* will give them water; it is your business to be there, occupying your place, and it is their business to be gathered here at the time set apart for prayer, 'and I will give them water.'" The lad may have only his barley loaves and a few small fishes, but the Master will multiply them. There may seem to be little enough in our hand, only perhaps a cruse of water, not enough for one; but He who formed the sea, and holds it in the hollow of His hands can give enough to all the thirsty ones. You are now gathered together, beloved, and I pray the Master to be as good as His promise, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." Here is the promise; a blessed thing to work upon, this. We shall build well enough upon so good a foundation.

II. And now, secondly, observe THE SONG.

These people had not been singing for years; ever since the day when they had sung at the Red Sea, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," the minstrelsy of Israel had been hushed—save and except when they danced before the calf of gold; but for their God they had had little or no music. But now they come together to the digging of the well, and the children of Israel sing this song, "Spring up, O well; sing you unto it."

Observe, then, that this song may be looked upon, in the first place, as *the voice of cheerfulness.* There was no water, but they were still in good spirits. Supplies were short, but their courage was still great. It is very easy to be happy and cheerful in heart when you have all that heart can wish. It is not very difficult for us to maintain our spirits when all

things go just as we would have them go. But it is rather difficult to begin to sing when the mouth is dry, and the lips are parched, and the tongue almost refuses to do its duty. Cheerfulness in need, cheerfulness upon the bed of pain, cheerfulness under slander—singing, like the nightingale, in the night, praising God when the thorn is at the breast, this is a high Christian attainment, which we should seek after, and not be content without.

I like, too, the look of these children of Israel, *singing to the Lord before the water came,* praising Him while they were yet thirsty, living for a little while upon the recollections of the past, believing that He who smote the rock, and the waters gushed out, and who gave them bread from heaven, would surely supply their needs. Let us pitch a tune and join with them, however low our estate may be—

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

Note, again, that this song was the voice not so much of natural cheerfulness as of *cheerfulness sustained by faith*. They believed the promise, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." They sang the song of expectation. I think this is one of the peculiar enjoyments of faith, to be the substance of things hoped for, but the joy of hope; who shall measure it? Those who are strangers to it are certainly strangers to the sweetest matter in spiritual life. With the exception of present communion with Christ, the joy of a believer in this present state must be mainly the joy of hope. "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." We thank God that we shall be satisfied when we wake up in the likeness of Jesus. The anticipation of heaven makes earth become endurable, and the sorrows of time lose their weight when we think of the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Sing before the well begins to spring. Sing confidently, "Spring up, O well." You cannot make it spring, but sing as if you could, for God is with you. Say, "Down with my sin." You cannot cast it down, but God can, and therefore speak as one who speaks in God's name. Say, "Begone, unbelief!" You cannot make it go, but God's Spirit can, and therefore sing as knowing God is with you. "Spring up, O well!" Make that your song. Sing of the mercy yet to come, which your faith can see, although as yet you have not received it.

This song, also, was no doubt *greatly increased in its volume, and more elevated in its tone, when the water did begin to spring.* After the elders of the people had dug for a while, the flowing crystal began to leap into the air; they saw it run over the margin of the well—the multitude pressed around to quench their thirst, and then they sang, "Spring up, O well!

Flow on, flow on, perennial fount! Flow on, you wondrous stream divinely given! Flow on, and let the praises of those who drink flow also! Sing unto it, and you who drink lift up your songs, and you who mark your neighbors as their eyes flash with delight as they receive the needed refreshment, let your song increase as you see the joy of others." All you who have received anything of divine grace sing unto it! Bless God by singing and praising His name while you are receiving His favors. I think we would be more conscious of God's blessing coming to us if we were more ready to praise Him. Brothers and sisters, we receive so many of God's mercies at the backdoor: we ought to stand at the door, and take them in ourselves. Presents from a great king ought not to be unacknowledged, stowed away in the dark, forgotten in unthankfulness. Let us magnify the name of the Lord!

But I must not detain you longer upon this point. There was a promise, and then the children of Israel made a song out of the promise *before* it was accomplished; and then, as it was fulfilled to their delight and joy, they made the song yet sweeter and louder. So let our hearts sing of the promises of God! You are very poor, yet still sing, "Your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure"; and when the mercies come, then lift the song yet higher. "Bless the Lord who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles." "Spring up, O well; sing you unto it!"

III. But we remark in the third place, that the song was A PRAYER. "Spring up, O well," was virtually a prayer to God that He would make the well spring up, only it was faith's way of singing her prayer.

We would remark of this prayer, that *it went at once to work, and sought for that which was required.* What was needed? Not a well, but water; not merely digging in the sand, but the obtaining and the drinking of the water. Beloved believer, let me remind you that it is very easy for us to forget what it is that we need, and to be satisfied with something short of it. Now, what we need is not the means of divine grace, but the grace of the means. The means of grace are excellent when they bring us grace, but the means of grace are not the ultimata. It is not these that we seek, but divine grace itself. To show you what I mean—"*Spring up,* O well," was the prayer; it did not ask for the well, but for the well to spring up. So, tonight, or some other evening, when you are retired for your private devotions; and you have opened the Bible; and begun to read, do not be satisfied with merely reading through a chapter. Some good people read through two or three chapters—stupid people, as stupid as they are good, for doing such a thing! It is always better to read a little and digest it, than it is to read much and then think you have done a good thing by merely reading the letter of the word. For profit you might as well read the A B Cs backwards and forwards, as read a chapter of Scripture, un-

less you meditate upon it, and seek to understand its meaning. Words are nothing: the letter kills. The business of the believer with his Bible open is to pray, "Here is the well: spring up, O well; Lord, give me the meaning and spirit of Your word, while it lies open before me; apply Your word with power to my soul—threat or promise, doctrine or precept, whatever it may be—lead me into the soul and marrow of Your word." The Rabbis say that whole worlds of meaning hang upon every word of Scripture, but only he will find out the meaning who waits upon God with the prayer, "Spring up, O well." Or, perhaps you are about to kneel down to pray. I beseech you, do not be satisfied with getting through 50 or 100 choice sentences which look as if they were devout. That prayer has not benefited you which is not the prayer of the soul. You have need to say, "Spring up, O well; Lord, give me the spirit of prayer; help me to feel my need deeply, to perceive Your promise clearly, to exercise faith upon that promise, and then, by wrestling importunity to hold You fast, and say, 'I will not let You go unless You bless me.'" It is not the form of prayer; it is the spirit of prayer that shall truly benefit your souls. In vain might you open a book and read through 10,000 prayers—the best that were ever composed—it would be no benefit to you. "Spring up, O well!" Come, Holy Spirit, come and help my infirmities, for I know not what to pray for as I ought, but You make intercession for me with groans that cannot be uttered. You need in prayer, not the well so much as the springing up of the well. And it is just the same when you go to the ordinances. For instance, baptism can be of no service to the believer unless he devoutly perceives the meaning of it. He must know what it is to be dead with Christ, buried with Christ, risen with Christ, and before he comes to the ordinance, this should be his prayer, "Spring up, O well; Lord, give me to enjoy that which the outward emblem teaches me; give me true fellowship with Christ!" And so at the Lord's table, of what good is it to eat bread and drink wine? Oh, but when Jesus comes, and your soul feeds upon Him, and He makes you aware of it, like the chariots of Amminadib, when the well springs up. Oh, then the table is better than the banquets of kings!

And is it not the same when you come to the public assembly? The prayer meeting may be dull enough, unless the Spirit, the Comforter, is poured out upon us. We have been singing just now—how many were singing? Some were making melody with their lips, but not with their hearts. But, oh, when the hymn breaks out in richest blessings, like living waters, when you get through the shell of the hymn, and get at the soul and life of it, then, blessed be God, what a wellspring we often get in sacred songs! And further, with regard to the preaching of the truth of God; often and often does my soul groan out to God that He would give me liberty in the ministry, that He would lead me into the essence of His truth. O brothers and sisters, I sometimes feel, in preaching, like the

butcher, who cuts off meat for others, but does not get a mouthful for himself, and it is hard work indeed. I dare say you very often sit and hear God's word, but it has lost its savor. You cannot enjoy it; you do not seem to get into it. The baby at home in the cradle, or that ledger, or that bad debt, or something that has occurred in the family before you came here, distracts you. You cannot get into the spirit of worship. "Spring up, O well!" This is what we need. So let our prayer be like the song of the text, direct and to the point. Lord, do not put me off with the husks of ordinances and means of grace; give me Yourself! I had rather be a door-keeper, and really be in Your house, than sit in the seats of the Pharisees in the synagogue, and yet not see my Master. Strive after vital godliness, real soul-work, the life-giving operation of the Spirit of God in your hearts, or else, beloved, you may have the well, but you will not have any springing from it. Remember, then, it went direct to the point.

And notice, also, *that this prayer was the prayer of faith,* like the song. Now, "without faith it is impossible to please God." This is emphatically true with regard to prayer. He who pleads with God in unbelief really insults Him, and will get no blessing. Faith gives wings to our prayers, so that they fly heaven-high, but unbelief clogs and chains our prayers to earth. Many prayers never go beyond the ceiling of the room in which they were uttered, because there was no faith mingled with them. Oh, how lacking our prayers are in this one essential element! If we had more faith, what large blessings would come down to the church! When I listen to some prayers, I cannot help thinking, "Well, what is there left to pray for after that? Everything has been included in the petition that one could well conceive of. Now, if we could but get the answer," we ought to do so; and if we did, what a different state of affairs we should have. We need, indeed, more faith to make our poor words real genuine wrestling with God, so as to prevail with Him, and come off more than conquerors. God is not slack concerning His promises. We never yet put Him to the test and found Him lacking. The history of the church speaks through all ages with but one voice on this point, all things conspire to urge us to faith in God in connection with prayer to Him in time of need. If you want, then, some wells to spring up to supply the needs of yourself or your family, pray in faith; the rock, if necessary, shall flow with rivers of water. The driest wilderness shall send forth floods of refreshment. Have faith in God and call upon His name. "Pray without ceasing." "Spring up, O well!"

You will please notice, further, that it was *united prayer*. All the people prayed, "Spring up, O well!" I dare say that was a prayer meeting at which everybody prayed, for they were all thirsty, and therefore they all said, "Spring up, O well!" What blessed meetings those are when the souls of all present are in it! I hope we shall have some noble inquirers' meetings in this Tabernacle during the next month, and for many more

afterwards. Mr. Nivens was asked by someone whether he had had any inquirers' meetings. "No," he said, "we have not had any lately, for I do not think we have many inquiring saints among us!" "What?" said the other, "I never heard of that"; "Oh, but," Mr. Nivens said, "we must always have inquiring saints before we shall have inquiring sinners. 'For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel.' You see, saints must inquire, and then God will do it for them; and as soon as ever the saints begin to inquire, 'Will you not revive us again?' then sinners begin to inquire, 'What must we do to be saved?' Oh, if we could have a meeting where *all* would be inquirers: the saints inquiring—'When will You save my wife? When will You bless my husband? When will You look in grace on my children? When will You convert my neighbor?' And the sinners inquiring—'Lord, when will You meet with us, and give us to taste of Your salvation?'" I say, the prayer was a unanimous one—"Spring up, O well!" Brothers and sisters, may God touch you all with the heavenly fire so that you may *all* be unanimous in the one great desire that God would visit us, make our wells to spring up, and cause the whole church to be revived, and sinners to be saved!

IV. I cannot, however, tarry here, but must now conclude with the fourth head, which is this: they began with a promise; they turned the promise into a song and into a prayer, and they did not stop there, but THEN THEY WENT TO WORK.

"God helps them who help themselves," is an old proverb, and it is true with God's people as well as true of providence. If we want to have God's blessing, we must not expect to receive it by lying passive. The first blessings of divine grace come to passive sinners, but when the Lord quickens His people He makes them active. So here in this place. "I will give them water," but "the princes dug the well, the nobles of the people dug it, by the direction of the Lawgiver, with their staves." Here was effort used, reminding us of a parallel passage in that famous song, "Who passing through the Valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also fills the pools." They must dig the wells; the water does not come from below, it comes from above; the rain fills the pools. God fills the pools, but we must dig them.

And, observe, that when God intends to bless a people, *effort is always esteemed to be honorable.* "The princes dug the well, and the nobles of the people dug it." They were not ashamed of the work. And when God shall bless a church and people, they must all feel that it is a very great honor to do anything in the service of God. No matter though they may be very learned, they must feel it an honor to teach a class in a Sunday school for Christ. They may be rich, but they must feel it an honor to open the pew-doors, or the place-doors, or do anything for the Master. They may be very famous, and very much esteemed, but they must feel it to be an honor to wait upon the most humble inquiring soul. And what

an honor it really is! Why, princes are not so honored as those are who are allowed by God to be "workers together" with Him in the economy of divine grace! Brothers and sisters, covet earnestly the best gifts in this matter. Seek after usefulness as hunters seek after their game, and as miners hunt after their treasure. Seek to serve God. You will be princes in this way. They are the princes who dig the wells; they are the true nobles who use their staves in the Master's service. Before man sinned, he worked for God. Adam was put into the garden to till it and to dress it. He was not made to lead an idle, useless life. His state of innocence was one of service to his Maker. When men shall be once more in a state of purity, their highest honor will be—"His servants shall serve Him." heaven is a place where they serve Him day and night in His Temple. Idleness is sin and shame to us. It is our duty to labor, and our highest dignity is to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, the princes of old, and the nobles, helped to dig the well. It was effort which they all felt to be honorable. Well has our poet put it—

"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."

But it was also effort *which was accomplished by very feeble means.* They dug the well, and they dug it with their staves—not very first-class tools. Would not the spade have been better? Yes, but they did as they were told. They dug with their staves. These, I suppose, were simply their rods, which, like the sheiks in the East, they carried in their hands as an emblem of government, somewhat similar to the crook of the shepherd. These they used, as they were commanded. Well, dear friends, we must dig with our staves. We must dig as we can. We must use what abilities we have. It is every Christian's duty to try to know as much and get as much talent as he can, but if you have but one talent, use that one talent. Go to trade for Christ with it. If you cannot do what you wish you could, do what you can, remembering that the Lord saves not by the mighty, and works not His greatest things by the mighty ones; but He has chosen the "base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are." I should look very much like a fool if I went a well-digging with a stick; and yet if God told me to do so, then I should be wise in doing it. Go, Christian, with such talent as God has given you, and God will bless you, and make your lamps and trumpets to be as mighty for the overthrow of Midian, as they were in the hands of Gideon of old. Here was honorable effort with feeble means.

And, observe, *it was effort in God's order.* They dug the well "by the direction of the Lawgiver." We must not serve God according to our fancies. The *Westminster Assembly's Catechism* well lays down idolatry to be "not only the worship of a false god, but the worship of God, the true God, in a way which He has not prescribed." Consequently, all ceremonies that are not commanded in Scripture are flat idolatry—it matters not what they are. Every mode of worshipping God which is not commanded by God is neither more nor less than flat idolatry. The children of Israel, in their apostasy, did not set up another god. It is clear to every reader of the story of the golden calf, that they did not worship another god when they fell down before it. They worshipped Jehovah under the form of that golden calf, but it was a way of worship which God had never ordained, for He said He allowed no similitude nor likeness of Himself to be attempted to be made, and therefore it was idolatry. And, mark you, when men adore pieces of bread, as they are fools enough to do nowadays, even though they tell you they worship Christ under the form of that bread—it is idolatry! It is a glaring breaking of the second commandment, and we doubt not will bring destruction upon those who fall into it. We must not forget in everything we do for God, to go to work in God's way. I hold that in revivalism I have no right to adopt anything which I cannot go before God with, and justify at the throne of God. I must not adopt a mode of procedure which I may think suits the place or is adapted to the times. Is it right? Let it be done. Is it wrong? Let it not be as much as a thought among the saints. We are never to "do evil that good may come," nor to run over and above, or counter to the current of Scripture, in order to work some doubtful good. We must dig the well according to the direction of the Lawgiver. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Let us keep close to the good old paths which are laid down in Holy Writ, and, digging the well, we shall get the water.

And then, in the last place, it was *effort made in faith.* They dug the well, but as they dug it they felt so certain that the water would come that they sang at the work, "Spring up, O well!" brothers and sisters, this is the true way to work if we would get a blessing. We must preach in faith, believing that the word cannot return unto our Master void. We must teach in the Sunday school in faith, believing that the children will be led to seek Christ early, and to find Him. We must distribute tracts in faith, believing that if we cast our bread upon the waters, we shall find it after many days. You must take care that you have this faith. You must not ask from God a blessing upon your work in a spirit of doubt, for he that wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed; let not that man expect to receive anything of the Lord; but believe the promise, believe that God will bless you if you seek His glory, and go about His work in His way, and you shall see the blessing—so great a

blessing that when you have proved your God, you shall not have room enough to receive it!

I want all the dear members of this church especially to join with me in breathing the prayer, day by day, and hour by hour, that the well would spring up in our midst. Conversion work is not pausing, I hope. I have been so long removed from you now, that I am longing to see some great work done by the Master. O that He would now make bare His arms! We have seen what the gospel can do in the salvation of souls, and in making God's people cleave close to Him. Let us ask for a renewal of those blessed seasons, and the continuance of our long prosperity. Let us pray for ourselves that our religion, our piety, may spring up like a well, "a well of living water springing up into everlasting life." And let us pray that the ministry may be greatly blessed among us, and for all our works—in the classes of the Sunday school, and everywhere else. "Spring up, O well," and God give us all to drink of the living waters till He leads us to the mount of God where we shall feed on the green pastures, and lie down by the river of life forever and ever.

There have been some things said, I trust, which may be blessed to you who do not know the Lord. I pray they may. Remember, trust in Christ is that which saves you. Rest alone in Jesus. It is the mount of Calvary that is the mount of your hope. Fly to the Savior, and you are saved. God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—NUMBERS 21.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

HELPS
NO. 777

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

"And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."
1 Corinthians 12:28.

IT appears, according to the apostle Paul, in regard to the diversity of gifts which proceeded from the Spirit of God, those who gave assistance to the early church did so in different ways. He tells us, "God has set some in the church, first apostles." These were to go from place to place founding churches and ordaining ministers. There were next, "secondarily, prophets," some of whom uttered prophecies, and others were gifted in their explanation. Then came, "thirdly, teachers," who were probably either pastors settled in many churches teaching the Word, or else Evangelists journeying about and proclaiming the truths of God. Then came, "after that, miracles, then gifts of healing"; and the apostle does not forget to mention another class of persons, called "helps."

Now, who these people precisely were, I suppose it would be very difficult, at this period of time, if not quite impossible, to tell. Some have thought that they were assistant-ministers who occasionally aided settled pastors, both in the pastoral work of visiting, and in occasionally preaching the Word. Others have thought that they were assistant-deacons, and perhaps even deaconesses, an office that most certainly was recognized in the apostolic churches. Others, again, have supposed these helps to have been attendants in the sanctuary, who took care that strangers were properly accommodated, and managed those details which always must be superintended by somebody in connection with any gathering of persons for any public object whatever. But whoever they were, or whatever may have been the particular functions they discharged, they appear to have been a useful body of people, and worthy to be mentioned in the same verse as apostles and teachers, and even to be named with miracle-workers, and those who had the gifts of healing. It strikes me that they were not persons who had any official standing, but that they were only moved by the natural impulse and the divine life within them to do anything and everything which would assist teacher, pastor, or deacon, in the work of the Lord. They were the sort of brothers and sisters who are useful anywhere, who can always stop a gap, and who are only too glad when they find that they can make themselves serviceable to the church of God in any capacity whatever.

We have a goodly brigade of "HELPS" in this church, and I want now to stir them up; and while I am speaking to them, perhaps a word or two

of comfort may come, as it were, from round the corner to some who need the assistance which these brothers and sisters give, and for whose help indeed, those of whom we speak lay out their lives.

John Bunyan that master of Christian experience as well as of Christian allegory has, it seems to me, described that part of the work of these "helps" which is most valuable, and which is most required. He describes *Help* as coming to *Christian* when he was floundering about in the *Slough of Despond.* Just when the poor man was likely to have been choked, having missed his footing in the slough, and when he found that, with all his struggling, he was only sinking deeper and deeper into the mire, there suddenly came to him a person of whom Bunyan says nothing more throughout his whole allegory, whose name was *Help,* and who put out his hand, and, saying some words of encouragement to Christian, pulled him out of the mire, set him on the King's Highway, and established his goings.

There is a period in the divine life when the help of judicious Christian brothers and sisters is invaluable. Most of us who know the Lord at all, know quite as much as we wish to know about that awful *Slough of Despond.* I myself did lay in it for five years, or thereabouts, and I think I know pretty well every part of it. In some places it is deeper than in others, and more nauseous; but believe me, a man may reckon himself thrice happy when he gets out of it, for when one is in it, it seems as though it would swallow him up alive. Dear, very dear to us, must ever be the hand that helped us out of the depth of the mire where there was no standing; and while we ascribe all the glory to the God of grace, we cannot but love most affectionately the instrument He sent to be the means of our deliverance.

On the summit of some of the Swiss passes, the canton, for the preservation and accommodation of travelers, maintains a small body of men, sometimes only two or three, who live in a little house at the top, and whose business it is to help travelers on their way. It was very pleasant when we were going through a pass in the mountains of Northern Italy, to see, some three or four miles from the top, a man coming down who saluted us as though he had known us for years. He carried a spade in his hand, and though we did not know what was coming, yet he evidently understood better than we did what was going to occur. By-and-by we came to deep snow, and the man went to work with his spade to clear a footway, and when he came to a very ugly piece of road, some of the party was carried along on the man's back. It was the man's business to care for the travelers, and before long there came one of his companions with wine and refreshments, which were generously offered to the weary ones. These men were "helps," who spent their lives on that part of the road where it was known their services would be required; and when travelers reach the spot, these men are ready to give their assistance in the nick of time. They would have been worth nothing at all down in the plains; they would have been only an encumbrance if they had met us in any other place, but they were exceedingly valuable, because they were

just where they were required, and came exactly at the moment when they were needed.

Now, my friends, "helps" are of no use to a man when he can help himself. When he has no difficulties, an offer of assistance is an intrusion. There is just one point, such a juncture as the passing of the summit of the mountain, where help will be exceedingly precious to him. And it seems to me, that the period of a man's experience which Bunyan describes by the *Slough of Despond,* is just that season when you, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, may render invaluable aid to the Christian minister by coming to the rescue of those who seem as though they would be swallowed up.

This brigade of "helps," if I understand Bunyan right, are stationed all-round the borders of the *Slough of Despond,* and it is their business to keep watch all round and listen for the cries of any poor unenlightened travelers who may be staggering in the mire. Just as the *Royal Humane Society* keep their men along the borders of the lakes in the parks in winter time, and when the ice is forming, bid them be on the watch, and take care of any who may venture upon it; so a little knot of Christian people, both men and women, should always be ready in every church, to listen for cries of distress, and to give assistance wherever it may be required. Such seem to me to be the sort of "helps" we need. Such, perhaps, these ancient "helps" may have been.

I. I will, first of all, to GIVE A FEW DIRECTIONS TO THESE "HELPS" AS TO HOW THEY MAY HELP POOR SINNERS OUT OF THE SLOUGH OF DESPOND.

After some little experience I have had in helping others, I would recommend one particular course at the outset. When you meet with someone who is despairing and thinks he cannot be saved, *get him to state his case.* This should always be the first thing. When *Help* went to *Christian* he did not at once put out his hand to him, but he said, "What are you doing there? How did you get there?" It does men good to state their spiritual case to others. Confession to a priest is a piece of abomination, but sometimes the communication of our spiritual difficulties to another will be in itself a most helpful exercise to us. You will know how to deal with them, and they will know the better what you want, when they put their necessities into words. I have occasionally found that the mere act of stating a difficulty has been the very means of at once removing it. Some of our doubts will not bear the light of day. Many spiritual difficulties are there, which, if a man did but look them fully and squarely in the face long enough to be able to describe them, would vanish even during the investigation. Let the youngster state his case. Get that young man alone, dear brother; get him to sit down quietly with you, and say to him, "Now, what is it you are distressed about? What is the point that puzzles you? What cannot you understand? What is it that dejects and dispirits you?" Let them state their own case.

Next to this, *enter, as much as lies in you, into their case.* This may seem to you, perhaps, an unimportant direction, but, depend upon it, you will be able to give very little help, if any, if you do not follow it. Sym-

pathy has very much to do with our ability to comfort others. If you cannot enter into their distress, you will scarcely be able to lift them out of it. Try to bring yourselves down to "weep with them who weep," as well as to "rejoice with those who rejoice." Do not sneer at a difficulty because it seems small to you, remember that it may be very great to the person who is troubled by it. Do not begin to scold, and tell the young man that he ought not to feel as he does, or to be as distressed as he is. As God puts His everlasting arms underneath you, so you must put the outstretched arms of your sympathy underneath your younger and weaker brothers and sisters that you may lift them up. If you see a brother in the mire, put your arms right down into the mud, that, by the grace of God, you may lift him bodily out of it! Remember that you were once just where that young sister of yours is now; try, if you can, to bring back your own feelings when you were in her condition. It may be, you say, that the stripling or the damsel is very foolish. Yes; but you were fools yourselves once, and then you abhorred all manner of meat, and your soul seemed to be drawing near to the gates of death. Now, you must use Paul's language, you must "become a fool for their sakes." You must put yourselves into the condition of these simple-minded ones. If you cannot do this, you need training to teach you how to be a *help*; as yet you do not know the way. Let them state their case, and then endeavor to feel their difficulties as your own.

Perhaps your next work ought to be, *to comfort these poor brothers and sisters with the promises. Help*, in *"Pilgrim's Progress,"* asked *Christian* why he did not look for the steps, and told him that there were good steps all the way through the mire; but *Christian* said he had missed them. Now, you can point these poor sinking ones to the steps. Brothers and sisters, be well acquainted with the promises of God; have them on the tip of your tongue, ready at any time. We have heard of a certain scholar who used to carry miniature copies of all the classic authors about with him, so that he seemed to have almost a dictionary in his pocket. O that you would carry miniature Bibles about with you! Or, better still, that you had all the word of God constantly with you in your heart, so that you might be able to speak a word in season to them who are weary! Whenever you come across a poor distressed soul it is a blessed thing for you to be able to say to him, "Yes, you are a sinner, it is true; but Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Perhaps he will tell you that he cannot do anything; but you may answer that he is not told to do anything, but to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he shall be saved. He will say, perhaps, that he cannot believe; but you can remind him of the promise, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"—that is, those who seek Him earnestly by prayer. Some texts in the Bible are like sundry stars in the sky—those constellations in the heavens which are so conspicuous, that when the mariner once sees them, he can very soon tell where he is. He determines the latitude and longitude of his own position by gazing intently on one of these celestial bodies. Some brilliant passages of Scripture appear to be set in the firmament of revelation as guiding stars to poor bewildered souls. Point to

these. Quote them often. Rivet the poor sinner's eyes upon them: this will be one of the best ways of helping him. Oh, if there is a poor despairing one here tonight, let me quote to him three great and mighty promises of our God—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." "He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy." "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." These three texts are specimens of promises by which you "helps" can assist sinking sinners.

After this, dear friends, *try to instruct those who may need your help more fully in the plan of salvation.* The gospel is preached every Sunday in hundreds of pulpits in England, and yet there is nothing so little known or understood in this country as "the truth as it is in Jesus." Sometimes the preacher cannot, even with all his attempts, make plain the simple gospel. You, perhaps, may be able to do it because you just happen to suit the comprehension of the person in hand. God is my witness how earnestly I always endeavor to make clear and plain whatever I say, but yet my peculiar modes of thought and expression may not be suitable to the cases of some in such an audience as this. Some one person may be able to meet cases which I cannot. If my brothers and sisters, the "helps," will be constantly active, they may often explain where I only confuse. That which may not have been understood as the preacher put it, may be comprehended when it is stated afresh by them. If you will only put the same thing in another shape, the sinner will say, "Ah, I see it now; I could not understand it from him, but I can understand it from you!" Do, if you would help souls, point them to the Savior; do not bother them about any irrelevant matters, but just talk to them at once about the precious blood—that is the main thing. Tell the sinner that whoever trusts in Christ shall be saved. Do not point to the wicket gate as *Evangelist* did; that is not the way, but point the sinner to the cross. Poor *Christian* would never have been in the *Slough of Despond* if he had had a proper person to direct him. Do not scold *Evangelist*, but just undo the mischief he did, by always pointing the sinner to Calvary.

Would you supplement this? I recommend you *to tell the troubled conscience your own experience.* Many have been able to get out of the *Slough of Despond* in this way. "What," says the young man, "did you ever feel as I do?" I must say I have often been really amused when I have been talking with young inquirers, to see them open their eyes with astonishment to think that I had ever felt as they did, whereas I would have opened mine with far greater astonishment if I had not. We sit down sometimes and tell our patients all their symptoms, and then they think we must have read their hearts, while the fact is, that our hearts are just like theirs, and in reading ourselves, we read them. We have gone along the same road as they have, and it would be a very hard thing if we could not describe what we have ourselves experienced. Even advanced Christians find great comfort in reading and hearing of the experience of others, if it is anything like their own; and to young people it really is a most blessed means of divine grace, to hear others tell what they have gone

through before them. I wish our elder brothers and sisters were more frequently "helps" in this matter, and that when they see others in trouble, they would tell them that they have passed through the very same difficulties, instead, as some do, of blaming the young people for not knowing what they cannot know, and upbraiding them because they have not "old heads on young shoulders," where, I am sure, they would be singularly out of place.

Once more, I think *you will very much help the young inquirer by praying with him.* Oh, the power of prayer! When you cannot tell the sinner what you want to say, you can sometimes tell it to God in the sinner's hearing. There is a way of saying, in prayer with a person, what you cannot say directly to his face, and it is well sometimes, when praying with another, to put the case very plainly and earnestly—something in this way: "Lord, You know that this poor young woman now present is very much troubled, but it is her own fault; she will not believe in Your love because she says there is no evidence of it; You have shown it in the gift of Your dear Son, but she still persists in wanting to see something of her own upon which she may rest, some good frames or feelings; she has been told many times that all her help lies in Christ, and not at all in herself, and yet she still keeps on seeking fire in the midst of water, and life in the graves of death. Open her eyes, Lord; turn her face in the right direction, and lead her to look to Christ, and not to self." Praying in this way, you see, often puts the case very plainly. There is a real power in prayer—the Lord still hears the cry of His people. As certainly, beloved, as ever the electric fluid bears the message from one place to another, as certainly as the laws of gravitation move the spheres, so certainly is prayer a mysterious, but a real power. God *does* hear prayer! Some of us are quite as certain of this as we are that we breathe—we have tried it and proved it. It is not occasionally that God has heard it, but it has become as regular a thing with us to ask and have, as it is for our children to ask for meat at the table and receive it at our hands. I should hardly think of attempting to prove that God hears my prayer, either to myself or anybody else; it has become so much the habit of my life to know that God hears prayer, that I have no more doubt of it than I have of the fact that if I lose my balance I shall fall, and that the power of gravitation affects me in walking, in sitting still, in rising up, and in lying down. Exercise, then, I beseech you, this power of prayer, and you shall often find that when nothing else will help a soul out of its difficulty, prayer will do it. There are no limits, dear friends, if God is with you, in your helping others, through the power of prayer.

These directions—and they are not very many—I want you to keep in your memories, as you would the directions of the *Royal Humane Society,* with reference to people who have been in danger of drowning. I dare say some of you have already practiced them so long, that you know them well enough.

II. Having spoken thus on how to help, I shall now describe THOSE WHO CAN HELP.

It is not everybody who can help in the way I have been describing. I want to enlist a little brigade of spiritual firemen; that is, I want to gather a company of "helps" to assist persons who may be slipping and floundering about in the *Slough of Despond.*

The first essential for a true "help" is, *that he or she should have a tender heart.* There are some people who seem to be prepared by divine grace on purpose to be soul-winners. I know a brother whom I did once venture to compare to a hunting dog in this matter, for no sooner did he suspect that there were anxious souls than he was on the alert; and did he but hear of a number of converts, and away he went. He seems dull and heavy at other times, but then his eyes flash, his heart beats, his whole soul is stirred up to action, and he becomes like a new man. Among converts and inquirers he is all alive—his soul takes fire directly; and amidst the diversities of gifts that proceed from the same Spirit, his gift evidently is to help souls. Such a man was Timothy, of whom Paul says, "I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state." You know, in common life, there are some people who seem to be born nurses. Others there are, to be sure, who cannot nurse at all; if you were ill you would never have them around you even if they would come for nothing and pay you for having them. They mean well, but somehow or other they would stomp across the room every time they moved, and would be sure to wake you up; and if there were any medicine to be taken at night, it would taste all the worse if they gave it to you. But you have known a real nurse—perhaps your own wife—you never did hear her walk across the room when you were ill, and you never would even if you had an instrument to your ear like a microscope to the eye, magnifying the minutest thing; she steps so softly that you might almost sooner hear her heartbeat than her footstep. Then, too, she understands your tastes exactly, and always knows what to bring you. Whoever heard of a nurse more fit for her work than Miss Nightingale? She seems as if she could do nothing else, and as if God had sent her into the world on purpose, not only that she might be a nurse herself, but that she might also teach others to nurse.

Well, it is just the same in spiritual things. I have used a homely illustration to show you what I mean. There are some people who, if they try to comfort you when you are distressed, go so awkwardly to work about it, that they are sure to give you a great deal more trouble than you had before. They really mean well, and try to do their best, but they cannot do what you need done. It is not their skill; they are not "helps"; they take a great crowbar to do the thing which a little picklock would easily effect, and they go about everything in such a strange, clumsy style, that you can see they were not made for the work. The true "help" to a distressed soul is a person, who, though his head may not be very big, has a large and warm heart. He is a man, or woman, in fact, all heart. It was said of John, that he was a pillar of fire from head to foot. This is the kind of man the soul needs when it is shivering in the cold winter of despondency. Such men I know: May God train many more, and give us all more of the gentleness that was in Christ, for unless in this way we are

naturally fit for the work, we shall never be able to do it. The "help," moreover, needs, not only a large heart, but *a very quick eye*. There is a way of getting the eye sensitively acute with regard to sinners. I know some brothers and sisters who, when they are sitting in their pews, can almost tell how the word is operating upon those who sit near them. Some people cannot do this, others can; and besides this, they know just what they ought to say to their neighbors in the seat when the sermon is over; they understand how to say it, and whether they ought to say it in the pew or going down stairs, or outside, or whether they ought to wait till sometime in the week. They appear to have an instinct which tells them just what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. Oh, it is a blessed thing when God thus sets watchmen along the borders of the *Slough of Despond;* then, *if they have quick ears,* they listen, and by-and-by they hear a splash over yonder in the Slough, and though it may be very dark and misty, they go to the rescue. Nobody else hears the cry but those who lay themselves out to listen for it. We also need for this work, *men and women who are quick of foot, to run.* Why, there are some of you who never speak to your neighbors about their souls; you have a sitting here, and you never think of speaking a word to those who sit next to you. I thank God there are some of you who will not let a stranger go out without a good word concerning Christ. I pray you persevere in the good habit, and the Lord will bless you, for while there is much to be done in such a congregation as this by the preacher, there is yet *more* to be done by these helps in getting to the conscience, and doing good to the soul. For a thoroughly efficient *"help,"* give me *people with a loving face.* We do not make our own faces; but I do not think a brother or sister who is habitually grim will do much with anxious inquirers. Cheerfulness commends itself, especially to a troubled heart. We do not want levity; there is a great difference between cheerfulness and levity. I can always tell a man who looks sweetly at me what I feel, far better than I can tell it to one who in a sort of official way talks to me as though it were his only business to inquire into my private concerns, and to find out all about what I am and where I have been. Go about your work softly, gently, affectionately; let your cheerful countenance tell that the religion you have is worth having, that it cheers and comforts you—and then the poor soul in the *Slough of Despond* will hope that it may cheer and comfort him.

Earnestly, too, let me recommend you to have a *firm foot.* If I have to go and pull a brother out of the *Slough*, I must know how to stand fast myself, or otherwise, while I am seeking to pull him out, I may fall in. I must remember that hearing the doubts of others may give rise to the same doubts in my own mind unless I am firmly established as to my own personal interest in Christ Jesus. If you would be useful, you must not be always doubting and fearing. Full assurance is not necessary to salvation, but it is very necessary to your success as a helper of others. I remember when I taught in the Sunday school, I was trying to point one of the boys in the class to the Savior. He seemed troubled, and he said to me, "Teacher, are you saved?" I said "Yes." "But are you sure you are?" said he, and though I did not answer him just then, I felt that I could not

very well tell him that there certainly was salvation in Jesus Christ unless I had tried Him for myself, and been assured of it. Do try to get a firm foot, dear brothers and sisters, and you will be more useful round the edge of the *Slough* than as though you were constantly slipping down.

Then, as you have to do business round this *Slough*, *try to know it well;* try to find out its worst parts, and where it is deepest. You will not have to go far to do this—you have probably been in it yourself, and therefore know something about it, but you can easily gather from one and another where it is worst. Seek, if you can, to understand the mental philosophy of despondency; I do not mean by studying Dougal Stewart and other writers on mental philosophy, but by real heart-felt experience seek to become practically acquainted with the doubts and fears which agitate coming souls. When you have done this, I hope the Lord will give you—for you will need it if you are to become very useful—*a good strong hand in order to grip the sinner.* Jesus Christ did not heal the lepers without touching them, and we cannot do good to other men by standing at a distance from them. The preacher sometimes gets hold of his hearers; he can feel he has them, and can do almost anything with them; and if you are to be a "help," you will have to learn the art of getting hold of the conscience, the heart, the judgment, the whole man. When you once get hold of a troubled heart, never let it go. Oh, I pray that you may have a hand like a vice that will never let go of the sinner when once you have hold of him. What? Shall the child of God let the sinner fall back into the *Slough?* No, not while the rock on which he stands holds fast, and while he can hold the sinner by the hands of prayer and faith. May God teach you to grip men by love, by spiritual sympathy, by passion for souls, so that you cannot let them go.

Once more, if you would help others out of the *Slough of Despond,* you must have *a bending back.* You cannot pull them out if you stand bolt upright—you must go right down to the man. There he is; he is almost gone; the mire is well near over his head; and you must turn up your sleeves, and go to work. "But the man cannot speak correct English!" Never mind; do not speak correct English to him, for he would not understand it; but speak bad English, which he can understand. It is said, that many of the sermons of Augustine are full of shockingly bad Latin, not because Augustine was not a good Latin scholar, but because the dog-Latin of the day suited his turn best to get hold of men. There is a certain prudery about ministers which disqualifies them for some work; they cannot bring their mouth to utter a truth of God in such language as fisherwomen would understand. Happy is that man whose mouth will say the truth in such a way that the persons he is speaking to will receive it. "But the dignity of the pulpit!" says one. Well, and what is that? The "dignity" of a war-chariot lies in the captives dragged at its wheels, and the "dignity of the pulpit" lies in the number of souls converted to God! Do not tell me of your fine jargon, your Johnsonian sentences, and your rolling periods; there is no "dignity" in any of these if they go over the heads of your hearers. You must condescend to men of low estate;

and you will sometimes meet with men and women to whom you really must talk to in a style which does not commend itself to your taste, but which your judgment and your heart will command and compel you to use.

Learn to stoop. Do not, for instance, go into a cottage like a fine lady coming to visit poor people; go and sit down on a chair, and sit on the edge, if the rushes are gone; sit close to the good woman, even if she is ever so dirty; and talk to her not as her superior, but as her equal. If there is a boy playing marbles, and you want to talk to him, you must not call him away from his play, nor look down upon him from an awful elevation, as a schoolmaster would, but begin with a few playful expressions, and then drop a more serious sentence into his ear. If you would do people good, you must go down to them where they are. It is no use preaching fine sermons to drowning men; but go to the edge of the pool, put out your arms, and try to pull them out! These, I truly think, are some of the qualifications of a true "help."

III. Let me now close by ENDEAVORING TO INCITE THOSE OF MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO HAVE BEEN "HELPS," TO GO ON YET MORE EARNESTLY IN THE WORK, AND TO STIR UP THOSE WHO HAVE NOT TRIED IT, TO BEGIN.

Perhaps somebody may ask, "Why should I help others?" And my answer shall be, *"because souls need help."* Is not that enough? The cry of misery is a sufficient argument for mercy. Souls need it: they die; they perish; they are ready to despair; help them. There was a story in the papers last week of a man being found dead in a ditch, who had been lying there dead for six weeks. It was said that somebody had heard a cry of, "Lost, lost," but it was dark, and he did not go out to see who it was! "Shocking! Shocking!" you say, and yet just the very same thing may have been done by you. There are some persons here tonight who may not cry, "Lost," because they do not feel they are lost, but they are so; and will you let them die in the ditch of their ignorance? There are others who are crying, "Lost!" and who need a word of comfort; and will you let them perish in despair for the lack of it? My brothers and sisters let the needs of humanity provoke you to activity. Remember, again, *how you were helped yourselves when you were in a like condition.* Some of us will never forget that dear Sunday school teacher, that tender mother, that Christian woman, that kind young man, that excellent elder of the church, who once did so much for us. We shall never forget their tender attention. They seemed to us as visions of bright angels when we were in the thick fog and darkness. Return the debt; repay the obligation; discharge what you owe; and you cannot do this except by helping others as you were helped yourselves.

Moreover, *Christ deserves it.* There is a lamb out there who is lost; it is *His* lamb; will you not care for it? If there were a strange child at my door asking for a night's shelter, humanity might prompt me to take in the poor little creature out of the snow and wind, but if it were the child of my brother, or of some dear friend, kindred sympathy would compel me to protect it. That sinner is your Savior's blood-bought one, and is very

dear to Him; he is a prodigal, but he is your Father's son, and consequently your own brother. By the relationship there is, though he discerns it not at present, you are bound. A moral obligation rests upon you to give him your help. O beloved, *you would not need any other argument, if you knew how blessed the work is in itself.* Would you acquire knowledge? Help others! Would you grow in divine grace? Help others! Would you shake off your own despondency? Help others! It quickens the pulse; it clears the vision; it steels the soul to courage; it confers a thousand blessings on your own souls to help others on the road to heaven! Shut up your heart's floods, and they will become noisome, stagnant, putrid, and foul; let them flow and they shall be fresh and sweet, and shall well up continually. Live for others, and you will live a hundred lives in one. For blessedness, commend me to industry, and divorce me from idleness.

But, if that is not enough, I think I may say that *you are called to this work.* Your Master has hired you; it is not for you to pick and choose what you will do; He has given you your talents, and you must do what He bids you. Tonight, then, before you leave this house, try to do some practical service for your Master, for He has called you to it. If you do not, *you will probably get the rod of correction.* If you do not help others, God will treat you as men do their stewards who make no righteous use of the goods entrusted to them; your talent may be taken from you. Sickness may be waiting for you, because you are not active while you are in health; you may be brought to poverty because you do not make a right use of riches; you may be brought into deep despair yourselves, because you have not helped despairing souls. Pharaoh's dream has often been fulfilled. He dreamed that that there were seven fat bulls who fed in the meadow, and by-and-by there came seven lean bulls that ate up the fat ones. Sometimes, when you are full of joy and peace, you are lazy and idle, and do not do any good to others; and whenever this is the case, you may depend upon it, that very soon the seven lean bulls will come and eat up the seven fat bulls. You may rest quite assured, that those lean days in which you do nothing for your Master, those lean prayers, those lean Sundays, will eat up your fat Sundays, your fat graces, your fat joys—and then where will you be?

Besides all this, *we are getting nearer heaven, and sinners are getting nearer hell.* The time in which we can win souls by serving Christ is getting very short. The days of some here must be very few, and with none of us can they be very long. O let us think of the reward! Happy spirit, who shall hear others say, as he enters the celestial regions, "My father, I welcome you!" Childless souls in glory who were never made a blessing to others on earth, must surely miss the very heaven of heaven; but they who have brought others to Christ shall have, in addition to their own heaven, the joy of sympathy with other spirits whom they were the means of blessing. I wish I could put my meaning into words that would burn their way into your hearts. I want every member of this church to be a worker. We do not need any drones. If there are any of you who want to eat and drink, and do nothing, there are plenty of places else-

where, where you can do it; there are empty pews about in abundance—go and fill them, for we do not need you! Every Christian who is not a bee is a wasp. The most quarrelsome persons are the most useless, and they who are the most happy and peaceable, are generally those who are doing most for Christ. We are not saved by working, but by grace, but because we are saved, we desire to be the instruments of bringing others to Jesus.

I would stir you all up to help in this work—old men, young men, and you, my sisters, and all of you, according to your gifts and experience, help. I want to make you feel, "I cannot do much, but I can help. I cannot preach, but I can help; I cannot pray in public, but I can help; I cannot give much money away, but I can help; I cannot officiate as an elder or a deacon, but I can help; I cannot shine as a bright particular star, but I can help; I cannot stand alone to serve my Master, but I can help." There is a text from which an old Puritan once preached a very singular sermon. There were only two words in the text, and they were, "And Bartholomew." The reason he took the text was that Bartholomew's name is never mentioned alone, but he is always spoken of as doing some good thing with somebody else. He is never the principal actor, but always second. Well, let this be your feeling that if you cannot do all yourself, you will help to do what you can.

We are not gathered here, this night as a meeting of council to present degrees to such disciples as through many sessions of labor have merited them. But by God's grace I confer upon you who have used your opportunities well, the sacred title of "Helps." Others of you shall have it when you deserve it. Go and win it! God grant that it may be your joy to wear the holy vestment of charity, fringed with humility, and to enter into heaven praising God that He helped you to be a helper to others!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 12.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

PLAIN WORDS WITH THE CARELESS
NO. 778

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 13, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, 'What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!'"
Luke 8:28.

IF we understand these words to be the exclamation of the evil spirit which tormented this poor demonian, they are very natural words, and one can very readily understand them, for the presence of Christ is such a great torment to the prince of evil, that he might well cry out, "Have you come to torment us before our time?" If we would put Satan to rout, we have only to preach the Lord Jesus in the power of the Spirit, for this is the hell of devils. Hence it is that he roars so much against gospel preachers: he roars because the gospel makes him hurt. But if these words are looked upon as the language of the man himself, they are most extraordinary. In fact, they are so singularly mad and foolish, that we can only account for them by the fact that, though it was a man who spoke, yet the devil was in him; for surely none but a man possessed with a devil would say to Jesus, who alone could bless him, "Depart from me!" or say, "Torment me not!"

And yet there are tens of thousands of men in this world who are saying just the same thing. Thousands of persons appear to be far more anxious to escape from salvation than to escape from eternal wrath. They avoid heaven's love with scrupulous diligence, and the prayer of their life seems to be, "Keep me, Lord, from heaven! Prevent me ever being saved! Give me the full swing of my sins, and let me live so as to ruin my soul!" Conduct most strange! From where comes such folly? The desire and determination of some men to destroy themselves are fixed and resolute to the last degree. Their self-hate, and their suicidal avoidance of mercy's thousand exhortations and entreaties are so extraordinary that, I repeat, we can only account for men being so besotted and maddened by the fact that Satan has mastery over them, and leads them captive at his will.

Before I proceed to discuss the words themselves, there is, however, something to be learned from them. We may learn that *a man may know a great deal about true religion and yet be a total stranger to it.* He may know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God Most High, and yet he may be possessed of a devil; no, as in this case, he may be a den for a whole legion of devils. Mere knowledge does nothing for us but puff us up. We may know, and know, and know, and so increase our responsibility, without bringing us at all into a state of hope. Beware of resting in head-knowledge. Beware of relying upon orthodoxy, for without love, with all your correctness of doctrine, you will be as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. It is well to be sound in the faith, but the soundness must

be in the heart as well as in the head. There is as ready a way to destruction by the road of orthodoxy as by the paths of heterodoxy. hell has thousands in it who were never heretics. Remember that the devils "believe and tremble." There are no sounder theoretical believers than devils, and yet their conduct is not affected by what they believe, and consequently they still remain at enmity to the Most High God. A mere head-believer is on a par therefore with fallen angels, and he will have his portion with them forever unless divine grace shall change his heart.

We learn also from the words of the text, that *there are a great many bad prayers prayed in the world.* The man said, "I beseech You, torment me not." He was earnest to get Christ to leave him alone, very earnest. Many, many, many well-worded prayers which have been excellent in themselves have not had half as much earnestness in them as this. Both men and swine run hard when Satan drives them, but the best of us are slow indeed in going to heaven. A sinner's prayer for his own misery is often a grim and awful thing to look upon, from its horrible earnestness. Yes, how often have we heard men offer prayers which it would be a very dreadful thing if God were to hear! What are oaths and blasphemies but prayers?—only they are prayers of the worst kind. A thousand mercies, indeed it is, that God has never granted the swearer's prayer, but has been pleased to spare him, though he has often invoked curses on his own head. Swearer, down on your knees this moment, and thank the Almighty that He has not taken you at your word! If you have ever made a league with death and a covenant with hell, and have asked that God would destroy you, be thankful that He has not done so. Take that as a sign of mercy, and pray that the long-suffering of God may lead you to repentance. I hope and pray that His having spared you is with the intent that He may eternally save you.

Now we shall come to the words themselves, though we shall not take them quite in the order in which they stand. The first thing to which I shall call your attention is *a mischievous misapprehension:* there are many foolish people in the world who imagine that Christ comes to torment them, and that His religion would make them miserable; the second thing is *a complaining question,* "What have I to do with You?" Many, many think that they have nothing to do with religion, nothing to do with Christ, and they ask, more or less, contemptuously or earnestly, as their state of mind may be, "What have *I* to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God Most High?"

I. First, we have to do with A VERY MISCHIEVOUS MISAPPREHENSION.

It is currently thought among mankind, that to receive the gospel of Christ would be to cease to be happy, to give up all joyfulness and cheerfulness, and to doom one's self to a life of melancholy. I shall argue upon that point a little, and I shall begin by admitting some things which are frankly to be acknowledged. An honest man, when he has espoused a cause, must not go in for it blindly, but must be willing to make admissions where truth requires them; even should they appear to be dead against him.

Now, I will admit that *if men will turn from their sins, the gospel will, if it gets at their consciences, make them miserable.* It will act as salt to raw

wounds or as a whip to rebellious backs. There are some of you of this sort whose pictures I could easily paint so that you would know yourselves at once. I have heard of and personally known persons who have been in the habit of practicing glaring vices, say, for instance, drunkenness, and yet they are here with remarkable regularity. They have been pleased, either with the greatness of the congregation, or else with the particular manner of the minister, and they have come again and again, and there has been some kind of impression produced, so that they had a hankering after the best things. They have by-and-by reasoned with themselves, "I cannot go on as I have done, and yet continue here—the man makes his knife too sharp. I must give up my sins or leave him altogether." And so, after a while, feeling themselves rendered perfectly wretched by the sermons to which they have listened, they have given up attending the means of divine grace. Many and many a man has gone down those steps under the columns in front yonder, grinding his teeth, and stamping his feet, and vowing that he would never come again; and yet he is the very man who is sure to come again before long. I am often very glad when that is the effect produced, for I have hope of men who have enough conscience left to be irritated by the truth of God. Better a wrathful hearer than a forgetful hearer. If the arrow irritates, let us hope that it has gone deep. I admit, then, I must admit it, that if men are resolved to keep their sins, it *will* be a very uncomfortable thing for them to hear about Christ Jesus, and holiness, and happiness, and sin, and the wrath to come. Jesus Christ's coming near them in the preaching of the gospel will torment impenitent sinners, and make them feel alarm and terror which they will try to drown by opposing the truth. Why, in the old Methodist times, when they took John Nelson, and impressed him to make him a soldier, they said, "Take the fellow away! Why, a man cannot nowadays get comfortably drunk, nor swear a round oath, but what there is some Methodist cant or other who is sure to reprove him!" Just so; wherever true religion is in the world, it makes sinners sin uncomfortably. The Christian is a standing rebuke to the ungodly. A man who is honest, and sober, and decent, and chaste, and who lives as a Christian should live, is such a rebuke to the wicked, that if they cannot burn him, and perhaps would like to do so in these times, yet, if they can but ignore him, or insinuate that he is a hypocrite, and that he has some sinister motive, they can then be a little comfortable at the service of evil, and warm their hands at Satan's fire. I trust this Tabernacle will always be too hot a place for such of you as mean to indulge in secret sins and hold on to hidden wickedness. Never will I, as long as God spares this tongue, flinch from telling you of your sins, for if I did I should expect that your guilt would rest upon me, and that the blood of your souls would lie at my door. O that we may have grace to be far more faithful, even though your approbation should turn to rancor! Yes, I admit it if you mean to go to hell, you need not come to hear the gospel, because your doing so will only make you uncomfortable in this world, and be of no service to you in the *next*.

Again, I must make another admission, namely, that *a great many people, at the time when they become serious for the first, and give themselves to Christ, are rendered, for a time, very miserable.* There are some

whose repentance is so exceedingly bitter that they make the very worst of company; they shun company themselves, and those who love merriment shun them. The terrors of the Lord are upon them, and they are feeling the burden of sin—it is no wonder that a cloud hangs over their brows. We read John Bunyan's life, and we cannot but admit that for years he was rendered, by religion, as wretched a man as he well could; and many others have passed through just that same state of mind, some for days, some for months, and others even for years. But allow me to remind you that this is not at all the fault of our Lord Jesus Christ, for if these people had come at once to Him, and obeyed the great gospel command, "Believe and live," they would have had instantaneous peace. Did you note that verse in the hymn which was given out just now? It told us that no preparations were needed before coming to Jesus. I will quote it again—

"This fountain, though rich, from charge is quite clear;
The poorer the wretch, the more welcome here:
Come needy, and guilty, come loathsome and bare;
You can't come too filthy, come just as you are."

Now, if a soul will but cast itself at once upon the glorious work of the great Redeemer, it shall then and there be saved. If those who were so long in soul trouble had but come to Christ, and had trusted Him, with all their sins about them, they would have had peace at once; and the reason why they were so long a time in misery, was because they did not go to Jesus Christ, but kept on looking to themselves—looking for this feeling, and that good action, and that other experience, and dreaming that because they did not see these, they could not be saved. O that they had accepted at once the simple truth of God, that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin." Now, if a man is under a physician's care, and he has a medicine sent to him, if he should be months in getting well, you cannot blame the physician, if you find that the medicine stands untasted upon the mantel. Why, the man has been trying 20 other things, and he has only gotten worse and worse. It is a good thing that he wishes to be healed; but how much better would it be if he would but try the right medicine, which alone can cure him? If he does not try the prescription, it is not the fault of the physician if he is long a sufferer—it is his own fault. Even so, if a man will not believe in Jesus, blame not the Master if he finds no salvation. O, poor troubled hearts, you need not go that roundabout way of sorrow, tempted, and tossed about, and tormented with a thousand doubts and fears—there is a far nearer and surer way to eternal life: if you come to Jesus Christ straightway, and fall down before the cross, and rest your soul simply there, you shall find joy and peace this very night—before you go to your rest, you shall know that you are "accepted in the Beloved." But even if this pain were necessary, notice this—is it not a very small cost to pay?—to be rendered wretched for a little time, if afterwards there shall come perfect peace, and if, especially, as the result of that there shall be eternal salvation in the world to come? Why, supposing a part of your foot has become diseased, and a bone has to be taken out, you do not say, "Oh, but the surgeon cuts so deep, and he has to use so many dreadful tools!" Of course he has, but if he can save the limb, or preserve your life,

nobody thinks of a little pinch so long as his life is preserved. Ah, if you had to stand waiting for Jesus at mercy's gate in the cold, with the hail-storm of wrath pelting you for ages upon ages, it would be a small thing to endure if you might afterwards enter into the rest which remains for the people of God. Even on that computation, the thing is a good bargain, and he that is wise will reckon the cost to be little enough.

But now that I have admitted this, I need to ask those who say that Jesus Christ would make them miserable, a question or two. I have admitted a great deal—now, be fair and open with me in return. You are afraid of being made miserable. Are you so mightily happy, then, at the present moment? You are afraid that if you became a Christian you would be melancholy. Now, tell me, *are you so wonderfully full of joy at the present moment?* Are you so marvelously happy that you are afraid of damaging your little paradise? Excuse me if I say that I rather question whether those Elysian fields of yours are so very delightful. I have my doubts about those charming pleasures of yours, and suspect them to be more paint than reality. Ah, my friends, we little know the miseries of the wicked. Take the drunk, for instance, what a jolly genial fellow he is! Yes, but what does Solomon say? "Who has *woe?"* Hear that question again, "Who has *woe?"* Why, this man whom the world calls "such a jolly fellow!" He has *woe* because he tarries long at the wine, and mingles his strong drink. If men were rational, none of them would take the drunk's woe for the drunk's mirth. There is no comparison—he has a dear price, a heavy penalty to pay for all his apparent joy. Rare old cordials turn out to be blue ruin, and fine sparkling wines end in darkness and death. It is so with all vices, they froth a little, and then turn to wormwood, the dregs of which all the wicked of the earth shall drink. Who does not know that the penalty of fleshly vices is too horrible for us to describe? A man cannot sin without bringing upon himself some sorrow even in this life. Wretchedness follows at the tail of transgression. Do not tell me—a working man, who spends his money at the gin palace, or the beer shop, cannot have a happy home. The woman, who gads about here and there, visiting this and that place of pleasure and amusement, and neglecting her family, does not find it all happiness. I am sure she does not, her face is evidence to the contrary. Those who lie, and cheat, and swear, and forget God, I am quite sure, do not find as much joy as they profess to have. So, then, to make short work of the business, you who whine about religion as being melancholy, are generally a set of hypocrites, so come here, sir, and let me tell you a little plain truth. Why, you pitiful creature, to tell me that religion would make you melancholy, when you are as melancholy now as you can pretty well live, and have looked after this excitement and that to try and forget yourself, for when you sit down when you are sober, and calculate what you are, and where you are going, you know very well that nothing could make you much more miserable than you are, and you are about as dull now as you could be! Do not make this mighty fuss about religion making you miserable, when you are miserable already; but, like a sensible man, find no fault with what you have not tried.

There is another question I would like to ask you, and that is: if you reply that you are happy now, I should be glad to know *whether the pre-*

sent happiness which you enjoy, or say you enjoy, will last you very long? The leaves are now falling very rapidly from the trees, and they remind us that we, too, must die. Will your mirth and your jollity support you in your dying hour? Do you expect that these things will buoy you up amidst the chill waves of the black sea of death? No; you admit that all your rare jollity must end, then: well, is not this a poor prospect for a dying pillow? Is this a wise choice, to choose to die without a hope? And after death—what then? Will your present worldly delights minister comfort to you in another state? Do you expect that the gaieties and vanities of life, in which both rich and poor indulge, will be a comfort to you in looking back upon them, when your soul is separated from your body, and you stand before the bar of God? And if you die unsaved, and God condemns you, driving you from His presence, do you think that the merriment of the ballroom, the theater, and the drinking bar, will in their remembrance yield drops of water to your burning tongue in eternity? Will these things be pillows for your aching head in hell? Will the sinful joys of earth breathe the soft breath of consolation upon you when Christ has said, "Depart, you cursed"? You know very well they will not. Listen to me, then. These joys of yours which you are so afraid of losing, they are but bubbles, and they burst; they are mere child's toys, and you break them and have done with them; and you yourself will soon be where no more bubbles are blown, and no more toys made to sport with; do not, therefore, make so much noise about your joy—there is nothing in it. Sirs, you might throw your joys to the dogs, and even they would refuse them; for the joys that a man can know apart from Christ, are unworthy of an immortal being—they are unsatisfactory, delusive, and destructive; and if the religion of Christ does take all such joys from you, it only removes from you mischiefs which you ought to be most glad to lose.

But now, we will go farther in dealing with this mischievous misapprehension. You have a notion that if Jesus Christ should come into your heart; you would have to give up your pleasures. Now, *what pleasures?* The pleasures of the hearth and family fireside; the pleasures of seeing your children growing up around you to call you blessed; the pleasures of doing good; the pleasures of discharging your duties as in the sight of God; the pleasures of a quiet conscience; the pleasures of knowing that you can look both your fellow men and your God in the face; the pleasure of having a good hope as to the hereafter; the pleasure of having a good friend to whom to tell all your troubles; the pleasure of going to your heavenly Father with all your griefs and sorrows? None of these will Jesus take away; nor can I conceive of any pleasure that is worth calling a pleasure, which a man will lose by becoming a Christian. Ah, yes! I know what you mean. You mean that *you will not be able to go after your sins!* Now, I understand you, why did you not say so before and call a spade a spade? Call your sins, *sins,* but do not call them pleasures; and learn that the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, are but Satan's baits by which he takes souls upon his hook to their destruction. You shall lose no pleasure but that which is unhealthy, unfit for your soul, unsatisfactory in itself, and unworthy of your nature. If you come to the cross you shall find of a truth that—

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

It multiplies our truest and purest pleasures a thousand-fold!

"Oh," you say, *"but I shall have to give up my liberty!"* Your liberty? In what respect? Your liberty to be honest and to be upright; your liberty to love your neighbor; your liberty to be kind to the unthankful and the ungenerous; your liberty to go about doing good; your liberty to search, and judge, and know for yourselves? You will have to give up none of this in becoming a Christian! In fact, I dare to tell you, that you will have a liberty conferred upon you far more wonderful than any liberty which you as yet have known. "He is the free man whom the truth of God makes free, and all are slaves besides." Jesus Christ gives a man such an independence of spirit that he fears no one, but does what is right, actuated by the spirit of right within him; and then he goes through the world fearless of oppressors, dauntless and courageous under all circumstances, the Lord's free man. You will not have, then, to give up your liberty. Yes, I know what you mean—you mean *liberty to sin,* that is to say, *liberty to ruin yourselves!* Thank God, *that* liberty will be taken from you, for you never had any right to possess so terrible an engine of destruction; but it shall be so taken from you, that you yourself will be glad to miss it. Why, look at that swine yonder, wallowing in the mire: a miracle transforms it into an angel: has not that angel liberty to go and wallow in the same filth as before? Certainly he has, but does he ever use it? No, it is contrary to his seraphic nature to be found reveling in mire. So will it be with you; you will not care for those things which are now your delight, but, being made free from sin, you will count it foul scorn to serve it any longer. Oh, it will be no loss of liberty, but the unloosing of all your bonds!

Still you say, *"If I were a Christian it would make me melancholy!"* Why? Why would it make you melancholy? Make you melancholy to think that, if you live, God will be your Shepherd, and you shall not want? Make you melancholy to think that when you die—

"Jesus can make your dying bed feel soft as downy pillows?"

Make you melancholy to believe that you are on the way to heaven, and that when the trials of this poor life are over, you shall be with Jesus forever? I cannot imagine it! Let not Satan's lies deceive you. It will drive your melancholy most effectually away if Jesus Christ comes into your soul.

Now, I will put a few things to you, with the deepest earnestness, for I long to see you turned from your evil ways, and saved by the sovereign grace of God. O that the Holy Spirit may press home upon you the arguments which I try to use. You have heard the story of the Savior who came from heaven to earth to die for His enemies. *Do you believe that He came to make us miserable?* Can you look into the face of that man who bled for sinners that they might live, and believe that He came here with the malevolent design of making men wretched? You know better; in your heart you know better. There must be joy in that which such a man works out—so gracious a Redeemer must intend our best happiness. Listen to His teachings, and I will ask you then *whether they tend to make anyone miserable?* Point me to a precept where the Savior bids us cease to rejoice. I invite you to find in the word of God a commandment against sober, solid, pure, holy joy. *I* will find *you* words like these, "Rejoice in

the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." "Rejoice you in that day, and leap for joy." What day? A bright day? No. "When they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." He began His first sermon with the word, "blessed," and He repeated the word many times; and as He was at first, so He was at the last, for He was blessing His disciples when He ascended into heaven. He came into the world that His teaching might make men blessed, both here and hereafter. I will ask you again, *whether you notice in His followers any particular misery?* Some of them, through sickness, may be sad, and there may be some who profess to be Christians who have not enough religion yet to make them happy, but the most of us are a happy people. I will bear my witness, and speak for myself. I believe I have a spirit which delights in happiness, and that I am not naturally one of the dullest of mankind. I am not conscious now of being anything but simply honest in what I am about to say, and I can assure you that nothing has ever given me such joy as the knowledge that Jesus Christ is mine. I have had to suffer a great deal of pain lately, and nothing has assisted me to bear its sharpest twinges, and they have been sharp indeed, like the thought that—

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine."

I tell you, young men, you who want to see life, you must see Christ. You who want to have true happiness, a happiness to rise up and to sleep with, a happiness to live with and to die with—not the happiness of those silly butterflies that fly from flower to flower, and are never content except they are in the theater or the ballroom, but the happiness of a man who is worth calling a man—I tell you such solid happiness is to be found only in vital godliness. I am of the same mind as the poet Young, who said—

"A deity believed is joy begun;
A deity adored is joy advanced;
A deity beloved is joy matured:
Each branch of piety delight affords."

God is my witness, I lie not; there is a joy to be found in knowing Christ which in this entire round world besides cannot be found—search it through and through. "O that you had listened to My commandments! Then had your peace been as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea."

One thing I will also say, and then have done with this point. You really believe that religion is a happy thing, though you pretend you do not. You must confess, and you do confess, that *you desire to die like a Christian.* You like for the present, perhaps, to indulge in this folly and that iniquity, but you would like to die with Christ, would you not? Then if you would be like a Christian in death, you must be like a Christian in life. You have down deep in your heart, even though you may deny it, a consciousness that faith in Jesus is worth having, and that it would be worlds better for you if you were converted, and had the Holy Spirit dwelling in your hearts. Now, do not check that thought. Do not, I pray you, quench that inward consciousness. Believe it, for it is true, and oh, may you tonight, by divine grace, be led to seek the Savior, and may you find Him before you give sleep to your eyes. My longing for you is that you may be saved! My heart bleeds over the prospect of your eternal ru-

in. O that you may be led to Jesus! May you trust your soul in the hands of Jesus who was crucified, and you shall find that He does not torment you, but is comfort, fullness of comfort to your spirit.

II. My time flies by me all too rapidly, and I shall need all there is left for the second point, which is A COMPLAINING QUESTION—"What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God Most High?"

"What have I to do with You?" This is a question which we have heard many times. *Poor people often ask it.* I heard a workman say, "Well, I have nothing to do with religion; I know it is all very well for my employer, for parsons, and fine ladies, and aristocrats, and old women, but it is of no use to me. I have to work hard, and I have a family to bring up, and it has nothing to do with me." Now, give me your hand, my good fellow, and, believe me, you are quite mistaken. Why, there is nobody in the world whom it has more to do with than it has with you, for "the poor have the gospel preached to them." Jesus Christ sends His gospel especially to those who labor and are heavy laden. Moreover, I do not know anyone who could need it more than you do, for you have not very much in this life to cheer or comfort you. It is a hard fight to get through this world at all in times like these; but if you have a good hope for the next world to help you in the battles of this life, then you will bear your trials, and you will cheerfully endure the hardships which heavenly Wisdom appoints for you. There are a great many working men and their wives here tonight who are members of this church, and I know if they were to stand up for the purpose—and hundreds of them could—each one of them would tell you that the best inheritance they have ever had has been an interest in Christ, and that they never found themselves so truly blessed as when they laid hold on eternal life and trusted in Jesus! It has everything to do with you working people; I love you, and I long that you may believe this great truth of God, and put it to the test.

But very often the *wealthy* say, "What have we to do with You?" Lavender kid gloves and the gospel are not always well agreed: the upper circles are none the nearer heaven because of their imaginary elevation. There are also certain learned gentlemen who are instructed in metaphysics and philosophy who patronizingly inform us that the restraint of religion is a very proper thing to keep the working classes in some kind of order, but really they themselves are several degrees above it. Thus they say, as plainly as they can, "What have I to do with You?" Ah, the greatest fools in the world are those who despise other people, and they certainly do this who say that a thing is good enough for others, but quite unworthy of such excellent people as themselves. Who are they that they should lift up their heads so high? God "has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth;" and I reckon that that which is good for the poorest dustman, with his bell, is also good for the richest nobleman with his stars and belts; and that which may be a blessing to the most ignorant, will also be a blessing to the most learned. O my brothers and sisters, educated, refined, wealthy, as you may be, the gospel of Jesus has everything to do with you. The giant minds of Milton and of Newton found ample room in the gospel; they delighted to bathe, like leviathan, in the ocean of divine truth. Speak of philosophy? There is nothing as philosophical as the doctrine of the cross of Christ;

and as to metaphysics, if a man shall delight himself in these, he shall find arm-room and elbowroom enough in the study of the doctrines of grace. Here the stoutest champions of logic may meet each other in the arena of debate. Here is room for the most profound knowledge; and if you should study till you know all things, yet shall you find that the knowledge of Christ Jesus surpasses all knowledge, and that His cross is the most excellent of sciences. There is much to do with you, you great ones. May grace bow your necks to the yoke of Jesus.

"What have I to do with You?" say this and that individual in this vast assembly. There may be many here who are saying, "Religion has nothing to do with me." But, young woman, in your beauty religion will add a new charm to your attractions, an unfading luster such as nothing besides can yield. The knowledge of Christ Jesus shall give you a beauty of mind that shall last when the worm has furrowed that fair brow, and your well-fashioned form has dissolved into the old brown dust, which is the residue of all living. Young man, with all your manhood about you, full of life and spirit, Jesus Christ has much to do with you. He can make you manlier than you otherwise would have been. He can bring out the noble points of your character, and educate you to be something more than school or university can make you. And you who are in business, this will help you in your cares. You who have to toil, and slave, and bear the troubles of life, Jesus Christ will comfort and sustain you; and you gray-heads, who can need Jesus Christ more than you? Here is your staff, your dying pillow, your immortal rest.

What has He to do with any of you? Why, I trust that you have much to do with Him, and if you have not, yet at least He has something to do with you which I will now show you. What have you to do with Christ? There are two or three matters in which all of you have to do with Christ, whether you will or not, and the first is this: *it is because of His intercession that you are alive tonight.* Your tree brought forth no fruit, and the Master said, "Cut it down." Why, then, does it stand? Why, because the Husbandman said, "Spare it yet another year." Shall that tree ungratefully say, "What have I to do with the Husbandman," when it owes itself to Him? Ah, friend, the Jesus whom you despised has interposed, and lifted His pierced hand between you and the sword of justice, or your body would at this hour have been in the grave, and your soul would have been tormented in the pit of hell! You do have something to do with Him, then. Feel you no motions of penitence at the thought? Does not the Spirit of God lead you to honor the author of your continued existence?

Again, you have this to do with Christ: that *it is entirely owing to Him that you are now in a place where the gospel can be proclaimed to you.* O sinner, there could have been no hope, no gospel hope for you if Jesus had not died. What balm would there have been in Gilead, what physician there, if Jesus had not come from heaven to save? The fact that you are able to hear me say and that I am able to say it, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved;" that fact you owe to Christ. Otherwise, if we had met together, it would only have been to remind each other that we were under God's curse, and that when this life was over, we would go to a world of misery. Now we hear the silver trumpet sounding with the love notes of the heavenly invitation, "Come to the banquet

of mercy, you lame, and halt, and blind!" The chiefs of sinners may come, and, if they trust in Jesus, they shall be saved; but were it not for the crucified Son of the highest, no note of hope could reach the ears of the guilty.

I remind you, further, that if you ask, "What have I to do with Christ?" the time is hastening when that question will receive a most conclusive answer. At the last great day, if you have nothing to do with Him as a Savior, you will have to appear before Him as *Judge*. The days of divine grace will then be over. The great white throne will be set in the heavens, and a congregation infinitely greater than any we have ever seen will be gathered around that dreadful tribunal. All men must put in a personal appearance at the last assize, and each one will hear his final sentence. Ah, you cannot escape! You cannot hide yourselves from the eyes and hands of the Judge! The mountains refuse to bow their heads to cover you, and the rocks will not open their flinty heart to receive you! The eyes of fire find you out, and the voice of thunder says, "I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink." "Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded." "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." We *must* have to do with Christ! You may get away tonight, or any other night, and go into the haunts of sin, and say, "I will not be followed by the arrows of the gospel," but the arrows of *Justice* will surely overtake you. You may escape from the Savior, but you will rush into the arms of the Judge. You may fly from your friend, but you will only make Him your enemy. You may waste your life in neglecting Him, but the next life will never end, and your neglect shall bring upon you a remorse which can never know alleviation. "What have I to do with You?" The question is invested with great solemnity! Dear hearer, trifle no longer! Weigh well the question we have been considering, and never venture to ask it again.

Shall I tell you, before I close, what Jesus Christ may have to do with you, and what He has to do with many now present who have trusted Him? It would be a thousand mercies, and a thing to sing of in heaven, if some who came in here utterly careless tonight should go away impressed. I am so thankful to be able to preach to you again in the evening. I thank God I am able to be here. I thirst and pant to be at my solemn but beloved work again. I am so glad to be again employed by my Lord as the means of warning and entreating poor sinners: I thought I could not better show my thankfulness than by seeking the conversion of some who are farthest away from seriousness. I do hope many of the people of God have been praying that a blessing may come. My own soul keeps praying as I speak. O that the Lord may hear me! I may have some here who have never heard the gospel before, and others who have only dropped in out of curiosity. May this be "a word in season" to such.

Some of us were once as careless, as godless, as hopeless, and as sinful as any of you can be, and Jesus Christ has had this to do with us—He showed us our lost estate; He broke our hearts, and then He bade us look to Him. Oh, happy day when we did so! We saw Him, by faith, hanging on the cross, and we believed that He had suffered there for us. We rested our souls upon what He had done, and ever since that day, in-

stead of saying, "What have I to do with You?" we have felt that we have everything to do with Him. He washed us from our sins—our sins could never have been taken away from us by any other means. He clothed us with His righteousness—we have no other righteousness to wear than that which He has worked out and brought in. Since we have been brought into fellowship with Him, we have found it to be our pleasure to be obedient to His commands, our privilege to believe His promises, our joy to plead His name at the mercy seat, our transport to have converse with Him, and our delight to expect the time when we shall be like He, and shall see Him as He is.

You are no judges of what the Christian knows of enjoyment, if you are not Christians yourselves. You can no more judge of spiritual delights than a horse in a field can judge of the pleasures of the mathematician or the astronomer. You have not the nature that qualifies you for it. There is another world inside this world, another life within this life, and no one knows it but the man who has believed in Jesus; but, having believed in Jesus, thousands of us who are not enthusiasts nor fanatics, bear our witness that Jesus Christ is so precious, that if men did but know Him, they must love Him. If you did but know what delight it is to be a Christian, you would blame yourselves that you have lived so long without being one, too. If you could but know the sweetness of having Christ to be yours, you would not wish another hour to pass over your heads before you could say, "Christ is mine." The way to have Christ is to trust Him. There is life in a look at Jesus. There is nothing for you to do, nor even to feel, but simply to come just as you are, and trust Jesus. This is the gospel, "He who believes and is baptized, shall be saved." Baptism is the outward expression of your faith. You are immersed in water to signify that you believe that you are buried with Christ, and that you rise again to life in Him. But the saving matter is the *believing*—the *trusting* is the great soul-saving grace. Baptism follows as a test of obedience, and a means of refreshment to the soul. "He who believes on Him has everlasting life." "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."

This night, eternal Father, give Your Son to see of His soul's travail. This night, we beseech You, grant that some may no longer reject Your Son, but may the eternal Spirit, who can plead as we cannot, work effectually with the wills and consciences of men, and compel those to come in who, up to now, have stood outside, that Your house of mercy may be filled. The Lord answer the desire of our hearts, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE OF MAN'S SIN
NO. 779

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 3, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Yes, you heard not; yes, you knew not; yes, from that time that your ear was not opened: for I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb." Isaiah 48:8.

THE ancient people of God were most annoyingly emotionless, and although the Lord taught them very plainly and repeatedly, line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, yet they would not understand His will. More especially, in order to convince them that Jehovah was the only true God, and that the gods of the heathen were not gods, He was pleased to send them prophets to foretell things to come; and when those events transpired which had been so plainly predicted, one would have thought that ordinary sense and reason would have led them to adore the God who thus proved His existence and His foreknowledge. But even this powerful proof did not convince them; they still paid more respect to the gods of the heathen than to the one and only living God, and their souls sought after the idols of the nations. The Lord rebukes them for this folly in the verse before us. "Yes, you heard not," though I spoke so plainly that the deaf might hear, yet you would not listen to My voice. Though taught by God-sent prophets, yet the people refused to be instructed. "Yes, you knew not," though your own internal consciousness might have taught it to you, apart from any voice, yet you would neither learn from without nor consider within. Nothing can exceed the obstinate stupidity of the unrenewed heart; it will not learn, let the teaching come as it may. "From that time that your ear was not opened," for your ear had become as though sealed up, impervious to sound, your heart had become so vile with iniquity as to be incapable of feeling. And this was not because the Jewish people were foolish or naturally devoid of intelligence, for, as we all know, to this very day there is no sharper generation under heaven than the sons of Judah; and yet, in the days of Isaiah and until the captivity, they proved themselves to be most arrant fools, in that they still went after the idols which had brought them no blessing, and forsook the Lord who alone could benefit them.

As in a mirror, let us see ourselves. Let the unconverted man see his own picture. God has spoken quite as pointedly to you as ever He did to the seed of Israel. He has called you by providences of different kinds. His mercies have wooed you to the worship of a generous God. Afflictions have called you to kiss the hand that smote you, and to turn unto the Lord, who smites us out of mercy to our souls. Providence has spoken to

you with many tongues, with singular patience, and persevering tenderness. As for the Bible, which is open before you, and in all your houses, has it not often addressed you with a voice most clear and simple, "Turn you, turn you; why will you die?" There is not a lack of express texts of Scripture to assure you that the way of sin is not the path of peace, and that only the path of obedient repentance and trust in the Lord Jesus can lead you to happiness here and hereafter. You have some of you been called by the admonitions of affectionate and godly parents, who perhaps from the skies are beckoning you this morning in spirit to follow them to paradise; you were further invited to the path of holiness by loving friends in Sunday school—the recollections of whose earnest warnings have not quite faded from the tablets of your memory. Frequently the voice of God's minister has bid you to come to Jesus from the pulpit; and conscience, a still nearer pleader, if you would but hear his voice, has often echoed the voice of God setting its seal to the testimony of God's word, bidding you turn from your evil ways, and acquaint yourself with God, that you might be at peace. And yet up till now it may be said of many of you, "Yes, you heard not; yes, you knew not; yes, from that time that your ear was not opened." As yet the plow has been driven upon a rock which has not felt its power; the bread has been cast upon the water, and after many days there is no return.

Three times a *yes* is put in our text, as if to show God's wonder at man's obstinacy, and the certainty that such was the state of the heart. It was certainly so. You heard, but it went in one ear and out the other; you heard and heard not; you heard as sticks and stones might hear, or as cold, insensible steel. You knew not though the knowledge was before your eyes, and you might have known it. You are, I fear, many of you, among the blind people who have eyes, and the deaf people who have ears, who refuse to use their eyes and fast close their ears through willful ignorance. You know not what you might have known. The very birds of the air know their time, and the fishes of the sea obey the laws of the world's Great Governor, but ungodly men are more stupid and foolish than irrational creatures. The net is spread before us, and yet we fly into it; the lure is laid before our very eyes, and yet we willfully are ensnared. This accusation which God brought against the Jews, He can this day bring against the Gentiles, and who shall dare deny it?

More painful still is it to remember that in a certain degree, the same accusation may be laid at the door of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Even those who have received divine grace to become the sons of God, have not such a degree of spiritual sensibility as they should have; alas, my brothers and sisters, we may well bewail ourselves that *we* do not hear the voice of God as we ought. God often speaks in the heart of man, but man regards Him not. There are gentle motions of the Holy Spirit in the soul which are unheeded by us: there are whispers of divine commands and of heavenly love in our souls, which alike are unobserved by our lead intellects. God speaks to us in the silent shadows of the night, but when we lie awake we are not with Him, though He is with us. How often do we shirk a duty clearly revealed to us as a duty? How constantly

do we postpone obedience to precepts which are only to be fully obeyed by being kept at once? How constantly are we in the habit, when a command becomes disagreeable, even though we know it to be right, of ignoring it, forgetting it, and finding excuses for neglect? How little is there of the little child about us, and how much of the willful man! We are not like the sheep that follows close at the shepherd's hand, but, I fear, we are more like the bull unaccustomed to the yoke which kicks against the pricks. Whether you have to make the same confessions in private that I have to make, I do not know, but verily *I* must say, "Guilty," if the Lord says to me, "Yes, you have not heard": "yes, you have not known." There are matters within which we ought to see, corruptions which are making headway unobserved, sweet affections which are being blighted like flowers in the frost, untended and uncared for by us, gleams of heavenly sunlight which would enter if we did not shut them out, glimpses of the divine face which might be perceived if we did not wall up the windows of our soul; but we have not known. It is marvelous how little of introspection there is with many of God's people, how little they look within, how little they look after their own vineyard and the garden of their own souls. I am afraid most of us would have to say, "It is so," if it were said, "Yes, you have not known": for alas, though our ears are open, yet they naturally soon close themselves; they need to be cleansed again and again. Sanctification has need to be in us, my brothers and sisters, a perpetual work, a daily work. If ever we are to be wholly sanctified—spirit, soul, and body (as we thank God we shall be), we shall need to have the blood of Jesus applied every day, to go continually to Him and ask that the Holy Spirit would manifest in us the cleansing influence of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for still we do not hear and know as we should hear and know, nor are our ears opened as we should desire.

Having thus reminded you, dear friends, of your sin, trusting we may be led to confess it with deep humility, I have now an encouraging truth of God to tell you this morning, a very simple one, leaving no room for any of the graces of oratory, but one which to my mind has been exceedingly refreshing, and I trust it may be to yours. It is this, that all this folly and ignorance, and obstinacy and rebellion on our part, was foreknown by God, and notwithstanding that foreknowledge, He yet has been pleased to deal with us in a way of mercy. That one truth is the subject of this morning's discourse. We read it in these words, "For I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb." The same truth is stated in the fourth verse, "Because I knew that you were obstinate, and your neck was an iron sinew, and your brow brass." First, *we shall endeavor to address this truth of God to the believer,* and secondly *to the unbeliever.*

I. First, THE BELIEVER.

The latter part of our text mentions *a mournful fact,* "I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb." believer, here then is this sorrowful truth, you have dealt very treacherously! Does not the very mention of this bring tears into your eyes? Ah, if your heart were not hard, it would be so. You have dealt *very*

treacherously. Let me sound those two words again, "treacherously," *"very treacherously."* You are the beloved of heaven, redeemed by blood, called by divine grace, preserved in Christ Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, on your way to heaven, soon to be with God, and yet, "You have dealt very treacherously": very treacherously with God, your best friend; very treacherously with Jesus, whose you are; very treacherously with the Holy Spirit, by whom alone you can be quickened unto eternal life! That word "treacherously," is one which a man would not like to have applied to himself in the common transactions of life; he would feel it to be very galling, and, if there were truth in it, very degrading, and yet I question whether it will produce the same effect upon our minds when it is applied to us in relation to unfaithfulness to God. We have dealt with Him very treacherously. Come; let me refresh your memories, my beloved in the Lord. How treacherous you and I have been to our own vows and promises when we were first converted! Do you remember the love of your espousals, that happy time, the springtide of spiritual life when the rain was over and gone, and the voice of the turtledove was heard in your soul? Oh, how closely did you cling to your Master then! You heard some of the older saints complaining that their souls were cleaving to the dust: you wondered at them, for you said within yourself, "The blessedness I know in finding Christ will continue with me forever: He shall never have to charge me with indifference; my feet shall never grow slow in traveling the way of His service; I will not allow my heart to go wandering after other loves. White and ruddy is my beloved with all human excellence and divine glories combined; farewell, all you meaner creatures, for in Him is every store of ineffable sweetness. I give all up; I renounce *all* for my Lord Jesus' sake." But now, has it been so? Charge your memory—has it been so? Conscience, what do you say to this? Alas, if conscience speaks, it will say, "He who promised so well has performed most ill. Prayer has oftentimes been slurred—it has been short, but not sweet; it has been brief, but not fervent. Communion with Christ has been forgotten by the day, no, by the weeks together. Instead of a heavenly mind, there have been carnal cares, worldly vanities and thoughts of evil. Instead of service, there has been disobedience; instead of fervency, lukewarmness; instead of patience, petulance; instead of faith, confidence in an arm of flesh." We have, if we look at what we thought we would be and at what we are, reason to confess that we have dealt very treacherously. Look at this picture, and on that: look at what we vowed to be, and at what we have been, and truly none among us will be able to say, "Not guilty," but we must confess that we have been traitors to the Most High!

This is not all. It is not merely that we have failed in promises which were made in a period of excitement, but we have been treacherous to obligations which were altogether apart from voluntary vows on our part; we have been treacherous to the most blessed relationships which divine Mercy could have instituted. Know you not that you are redeemed men and women, and therefore the property of the Lord Jesus? "You are not your own," says the apostle, "For you are bought with a price." "Foras-

much as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold……but with the precious blood of Jesus." I ask you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, most solemnly, have you not lived as if you were your own? Have you not found yourselves full often spending your strength for self and for the world, and robbing Jesus of that which He purchased at so dear a price? Treachery to the blood of Jesus! What words shall I use in denouncing it? Words would little avail—let our penitent thoughts purge the sin which is so surely in us. Treacherous to Your wounds, O Jesus, oh forgive us, and let us not be further guilty of it! How shameful to be treacherous to Him who never forgets us, but who this day stands with our names engraved on His breastplate before the eternal throne.

Remember, that we are soldiers of Christ, enlisted soldiers, sworn in for a life-long campaign. As soldiers, by cowardice, disobedience, and desertion, we have been treacherous to a very shameful degree. You know what the military penalty is for a treacherous soldier on earth! Truly, if we had been accused and condemned by court martial, and ordered to be shot dead, we would have been dealt with most righteously. We have been armed, and carried bows, and have turned back in the day of battle. When we ought to have fought we have fled, when we should have stood fast, we have swerved, and when we might have conquered we have basely surrendered. We have been treacherous also as disciples of Christ; we were taken into His school to be taught and trained; we engaged to sit at His feet, and learn His word; we engaged to imitate His example, to abide by His precepts. Who among us has not played the Peter, and sometimes denied Him? Who among us can say that he has not forsaken Christ, and fled in some sharp hour of persecution? Beloved, as disciples we are not worthy of the name. If the Master should discharge us forever from His sacred school of holy learning, and say, "You have been false friends; you have eaten bread with Me, but lifted up your heel against Me; you have only followed Me in the days of sunshine, but have gone from Me in the days of storm," should we not have to bow our heads before Him, and say, "Lord, it is even so"?

Worst of all is the fact that we have been treacherous to our Lord in a relationship where fidelity constitutes the very essence of bliss. I mean in the marriage bond which exists between our soul and Christ. There is not one among us who would not blush or feel indignant if the slightest accusation could be brought against our conjugal fidelity to those who are dear to us on earth; but there is a marriage which has been consummated between us and a nobler Bridegroom than this earth can find, and here—ah, where are your blushes!—let your cheeks burn as you confess the unpardonable infidelity—we have been unfaithful to the Well-beloved, the infinitely glorious Husband of our souls. We are one with Him, by eternal Union one, and yet we treat Him so treacherously! Never did He have a thought towards us that was unkind, never one faithless wandering of His holy immutable mind; but as for us, we have thought of a thousand lovers, and allowed our heart to be seduced by rivals, which were no more to be compared with Christ than darkness is to be com-

pared with the blaze of noon. It is said of Israel that although they had the manna from heaven to eat, and God-given water to drink, and the divine presence resplendent in the night in the pillar of fire, and comforting by day in the shadowy pillar of cloud, yet they did yearn for the leeks, the garlic, and the onions of Egypt. What foolery is this, that God all glorious is to be despised, and the rank ill-scented garden stuff of Egypt—leeks, and garlic, and onions, are put in the place of Jehovah! And yet such is our case. Thrice glorious Lord Jesus, we must confess in Your presence, that we have behaved very treacherously, and gone after worthless trifles when our soul should have been set on You alone.

I shall not enlarge upon a subject so painful, because I trust I may have sufficiently revived your memories to bring you into a state of humiliation. We pass on to *the divine statement* of the text, that all this was known—"You have behaved very treacherously, and I knew that you would do so." It was all known. The Lord foreknew all the original corruption of His people—

"He saw them ruined in the fall,
Yet loved them notwithstanding all."

It was no secret that we were transgressors from the womb. God knew it; He chose us as such; He saw us depraved, debased sons of Adam with judgment unhinged, conscience darkened, affections polluted, and wills perverted; He saw the neck as an iron sinew, and the brow of brass, and yet He chose us who from birth were full of sin. As the Lord foreknew the fountain of sin, so He knew all the streams which would gush from it. There is not a sin which a child of God has committed, or ever shall commit, which was not clearly foreseen to the prescient eyes of God Most High from all eternity. You deny Him to be God if you deny that, for it enters into the very essential of Deity that He should know everything. There are no unknown things to God. He fills His own eternal now; man only occupies the present, which is ever fleeting; but the past, the present, and the future are all as one moment with God. A thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday when it is past. Therefore all the actual transgressions of His people were conspicuous before His eternal mind—

"Long before the sun's refulgent ray
Primeval shades of darkness drove."

And all the evil thoughts which have gone with these evil actions were foreknown to Him. If there are mixed up with the sin some motive more vile than the crime itself; if unexpressed and unknown to man there should lurk in our breast some passion more pernicious than malice ever produced; if there should be a thought more devilish than Satan's vilest deed; if there should be known to us some cursed imagination so diabolical that we dare not whisper it in the ear of our most tender friend, yet all was well known in heaven ages before. God knew that the root of all evil was in your heart, and foresaw how it would shoot and spread, and bear its horrid fruit. Perhaps there is someone here who is recollecting in his mind some gross sin of fearful name into which he fell in bygone years, but which he never will forget let him live for centuries. God has forgiven him, but he never can forgive himself. Some of the old bones of former feasts with Satan will stick in our throat. It matters not though

we have humbled ourselves a hundred times for them; we still have need to say with David, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." Let us here again recall to our minds the fact that all our sinfulness and the development of it, and all the thoughts and evil imagination that went with that development, and all and sundry the aggravations of our sin, whatever they may have been, must clearly have been known to God, and nothing has come out of us which God did not know would come out of us. We have never surprised the Most High; we have never brought Him to such a position that He could say, "I did not know this." We have never gone into any sin of which it could be said concerning God, that He did not know that it would so be worked by us.

Now, I think I hear impatient minds inquiring clamorously, "What purpose is there in the preacher's repeating to us this statement? He puts it over and over again in very simple terms; what is he aiming at? Where is the edification to the people of God?" In the first place, here is the edification. Seeing that this is most certain and sure, I want you *to adore the amazing grace of God!* Do you see, then, that knowing and foreknowing, God nevertheless chose us, elected us though He saw us covered from head to foot with sin! When election's eye fell upon us, we were regarded as the helpless infant in Ezekiel, cast out unwashed and unswaddled to perish in our filth, but then, viewing us as such, the divine Heart loved us! "His great love," says the apostle, "wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." We were, as Kent puts it—

"Loved when a wretch defiled with sin,
At war with heaven, in league with hell,
A slave to every lust obscene,
Who, living, lived but to rebel."

Do you not admire the marvelous sovereign grace which could have chosen you in the sight of all this? I can understand God's choosing me if He had not known my sinfulness, or if He had known only a part of it, but that He should choose me when He had an infinitely clearer sense of my sin than I ever can have, is indeed wonderful. I do know something of my sins at times, and am horrified at them, yet I never have had such a clear estimate of my sinfulness as God has, for the least sin is hateful to God, and He looks upon it as worthy of the eternal fires of hell. Yet we, in whom there is not only to be found little sin, but multitudes of great iniquities, were chosen from before the foundation of the world! Child of God, does not this make you admire electing love?

Further, remember that in consequence of your election you were redeemed. Come here, and wonder at the price that was paid for you, a traitor! You have dealt very treacherously, and yet you were redeemed not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ—when Christ knew what you would be! What do you say to this? Does not that thought make your eyes swim in tears as you think that He who hangs bleeding there, foresaw you as being unbelieving, backsliding, cold of heart, indifferent, careless, lax in prayer, and yet He said, "I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight,

you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life"? O redemption, how wondrously resplendent do you shine when we think how vile we are!

And then, dear friends, remember that you have been adopted into the Lord's family as well as redeemed. Now, when a man adopts a child, he supposes that he shall have an obedient child, that the child will be of a pliable temper, and he shall be able to rule and govern it. But by-and-by perhaps it turns out to be a very sorry specimen of the race. It grieves the generous spirit much to experience its ingratitude to him. Then he complains to himself, "If I had known what this child would have been, I would never have adopted it; I would have looked somewhere else." See, beloved, God knows what His children will be, that they will deal very disobediently, and yet for all that He says, "I will put them into the family." I might thus enumerate all the marvelous works which divine grace has worked in us and for us, and I think they would all shine very abundantly in the simple light of God's having known what we would be, and having done, with this knowledge, all that He has done for us.

Furthermore, I think this truth of God is very important to us, because in the light of it *our security is clearly manifest.* I cannot understand how we can be perplexed with the thought that God will cast us away now we are His people, if it is true that all the sins we have committed since conversion were all present before His mind; for surely if there is a reason in our sin for God casting us away now, since He foreknew that sin, it would have been an equally valid reason for His never loving us at all. A man undertakes mining operations in such-and-such a place, he says, "I shall dig for iron." Well, he meets with great difficulties, hard rocks to bore through, and so on. He comes to this conclusion, "If I had known of this labor, and of the expense, I would not have sought for the metal here." But suppose the man is well aware of everything, and that he meets with nothing but what he foresaw, then, you may depend upon it that the man means business, and having commenced operations he will continue working till he obtains that which he seeks after. Now our God can never be obstructed by a circumstance in us which can create surprise in His mind or throw His course out of His reckoning. He knew that we would be what we are, and He determined to save us in the teeth of all our rebellion; and, my brothers and sisters, I am persuaded that since the divine determination was wisely made, the cost all counted, and every circumstance taken into consideration, there can be no shadow of a fear that He will ever turn aside from His eternal purpose. Has He found me, as His child, to be exceedingly unruly? Will that tempt Him to drive me from the family? He knew I would be unruly! It might have prevented His beginning to love me, but, seeing He has begun, how can it operate to make Him cease from blessing me? Oh let this be a comfort to you, when the evil of sin weighs most heavily upon your faith! Your soul is married to Christ. Now, when a man takes a wife, it is for better or worse; and I can imagine that a man with a very base wife might say, "Had I known this woman better, had I known how she would constantly make my house unhappy, there certainly would have been no

marriage tie between us." But no husband could say that unless he was an arrant fool, if he were able beforehand to see as in a glass all that would happen between him and his spouse in his married life, and if he with his eyes open made the choice. Surely he could never repent it without confessing his folly in running into the snare. If he has wisely done he will stand to his engagement, and prove the power of his love. So it is between our condescending Lord and His elect. He has taken all our sins into the estimate when entering into marriage bonds with us, and He says, "I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord." "The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away." He has foreknown all their faults, and yet ordained them unto eternal life. Therefore are his people safe.

This truth also, I think, should tend very much *to enhance our sense of the fullness which is treasured up in Christ Jesus.* The Lord our God has provided for us in Christ, all the necessities that can occur, for He has foreknown all these necessities. "I knew that you would be this and that." Oh, is your heart heavy this morning? God knew it would be: there is the comfort that your heart's needs are already treasured in the promise. Seek the promise, believe it and obtain it. Do you feel, this morning that you never were so consciously vile as you are now? Behold the crimson fountain is still open with all its former efficacy to wash your sins away. Never shall you come into such a position that Christ cannot aid you. No pinch shall ever come in your spiritual affairs in which Jesus Christ shall not be equal to the emergency, for it has all been foreknown and provided for in Him. A man goes on a journey across the desert, and when he has made a day's advance and he pitches his tent, he discovers that he lacks many comforts and necessities which he has not brought in his baggage. "Ah," he says, "I did not foresee this: if I had this journey to do again, I would bring these things with me so necessary to my comfort." But God has foreseen all the necessities of His poor wandering children, and when those needs occur, supplies will be found ready. "My grace is sufficient for you." "As your days, so shall your strength be."

I think the truth of God is capable of being turned in many lights, but I must leave it with you. I believe the child of God will find that, simple as the doctrine of God's foreknowledge is, it is remarkably full of comfort. Some, who know no better, harp upon the foreknowledge of our repentance and faith, and say that, "election is according to the foreknowledge of God": a very Scriptural statement, but they make a very *unscriptural* interpretation of it. Advancing by slow degrees, they next assert that God foreknew the faith and the good works of His people. Undoubtedly true, since He foreknew everything; but then comes their groundless inference, namely, that therefore the Lord chose His people because He foreknew them to be believers. It is undoubtedly true that foreknown excellencies are not the causes of election, since I have shown you that the Lord foreknew all our *SIN:* and surely if there were enough virtue in our faith and goodness to compel Him to choose us, there would have been enough demerit in our bad works to have compelled Him to reject us; so that if you make foreknowledge to operate in one way, you must also take it in

the other, and you will soon perceive that it could not have been from anything good or bad in us that we were chosen, but according to the purpose of His own will, as it is written, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Herein God's great power may be seen, and His decree is made to roll, in peals of thunder over the heads of rebellious men, that they shall hear it even though they gnash their teeth at it. So then, "it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but God who shows mercy."

II. And now, for a short time, as God shall help me, I have to use the text in its relation to UNCONVERTED PERSONS.

I shall hopefully believe, this morning, that there are some in God's house, who, although they are unsaved, are, nevertheless, sufficiently awakened to desire eternal life, who have in them at least some sense of their guilt and their danger, and are anxious, if it may be, to find mercy. The doctrine of my text may afford them some comfort. My dear friend, you have discovered lately the natural vileness of your heart. If at one time anyone had told you that your heart was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, you would have been very angry, but you know it to be so now, painfully know it. You wish sometimes that you had never been born, sooner than that this should be the case. This day you have brought before your mind by your quickened conscience, your actual transgressions. There is no need that I should read the list, but the roll may well be written within and without with lamentations, for it is written within and without with iniquities. In addition to this, this morning, you have a deep regret for your long delay in seeking mercy, for you have been called by the gospel thousands of times, sometimes more than outwardly called, for conscience has been impressed and awakened, but your goodness "has been as the morning cloud, and as the early dew": you have quenched the Spirit of God; you have frequently resisted the better volitions of your own spirit. You feel sorrowful that this is the case. And, this morning, you are willing to acknowledge that there have been special aggravations in your case—you have sinned against more light than usual, against more expostulations than ordinary, sinned with less excuse, with more fearful pertinacity. All this you acknowledge. Now, my dear hearers, the gospel of Jesus Christ is sent to you in the state in which you now are, to you lost by nature, ruined by practice, and undone in a thousand ways. The gospel says to you, even to you, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Now, in order that you may get a hold on that gospel, despite the difficulties which your sins would raise, I would remind you of the truth of God of which we have been speaking. All these sins, delays, aggravations, and rebellions of yours, were all foreknown to God; therefore, since He has sent the gospel to you, I pray you be not slow to accept it, since it is not possible that your sins, whatever they may be, can at all influence against the fact that if you believe and receive the gospel you shall be saved. For, let me remind you that if God had not intended to save men upon believing, if their sins were so great that He did not intend to save them if they trusted in Jesus, why then, since He foreknew these things, He would never

have planned the plan of salvation at all! If He stops now and refuses to be gracious, why did He not stay His hand in the very first stage of the business? Would you devise a scheme unless you meant to go further? Who sits down to make plans of a house, unless he has some notion of carrying them out? If God intended no mercy to such a sinner as you are, why did He devise a plan which is suitable to such a sinner as you are? Why invent a scheme by which a rebel might be saved, if He foreknew that on account of sin that rebel never could be pardoned? Let me ask you, do you think God would have gone farther—gone to the vast expense of providing a Savior, if really the gospel were null and void? Jesus Christ hangs on the cross to die for sinners, sinners whose sins were all foreknown; do not say, therefore, that God does not intend to save, for if He had not intended to save, He would have stopped before He gave His Son for a sacrifice, and nailed Him to the cross.

"Ah, but," you say, "Mine is a particular and special case." Then I remind you that, since God had known all that, if He intended to leave your case out, why did He not say so in the Bible? If this were something new that had arisen since the Scriptures were written, then I could understand that yours might be exceptional; but nothing is new with the Most High. Now, if the Lord intended to leave out a case, He would have mentioned it, and we should have found somewhere in the Bible, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature except such-and-such a one." I do not find it so. "Preach the gospel to every creature": here it is, "He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved." He makes not an exception. He bids us go and proclaim it east, west, north, and south. "Ah, but," you say, "Still mine is a very special difficulty." Yes, but I tell you again, your God foreknew, and you may depend upon it, He provided for it in the plan of salvation. He says, "If you believe, you shall be saved." He says not, "Unless you have committed this or that." He says, "If you believe": and God is not true unless He saves every soul that believes in Jesus. Though a man had damned himself a thousand times with the blackest filth that ever came from hell; yet, if he believes in Jesus, God must be true to His solemn promise—it is not possible that the sin of man could justify God in flying from His promise or denying Himself. He declares full pardon to every soul that trusts in the Lord Jesus: I pray you slander not my Lord and Master by saying that this or that could make Him take His words back, or break His covenant in Christ Jesus. Your blasphemies—He knew what oaths you would swear. Your lusts and evil deeds—He knew into what mire you would plunge. The imaginations of your wicked heart—He knew them; yes, they have been before His eternal mind every moment since the world began, and before it. He knew that you would be a sinner—He never ceased to know your sins. All things are present before God at every time, and your aggravating sins have been before God's mind at every moment of eternity, if we may use the expression. And yet, notwithstanding that, He says, "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, and they shall be as wool." God knew you, sinner.

He did not fall upon the penitent's neck and kiss him, and think him clean and pure and chaste while He kissed him. He knew that he had spent his living with harlots. God knew that he went to feed with the swine, and yet He took him into His house and heart, and fed him daintily. He knows what you have done in secret, in the darkness of the night, in the chamber where none may follow you, in the inner chamber of your soul, where you have rebelled worse than in your outward actions. He knows it all, and yet He says, "Let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither 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." I do humbly and earnestly trust that the Lord may lead some sinner, whose sins He has so clearly discerned, to perceive the suitability of Christ to his own case, to close with the proclamation of mercy, and to say—

"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter, pardon gives;
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.
I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away,
I know I must forever die.
But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried,
This were to die (delightful thought)!
As sinner never died."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 48.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE SECRET SPOT
NO. 780

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 10, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Their spot is not the spot of His children."
Deuteronomy 32:5.

THERE are frequently great difficulties in identifying the persons of men, even when they have been distinctly seen. Our police courts have given us, during the last few weeks, most serious evidence that men may be utterly deceived as to the identity of individuals. They may be prepared, and honestly I believe, to take an oath that such-and-such a person is the man whom they saw discharging firearms or throwing stones, and yet that person may have been many miles away. A slight change of dress, another color in the necktie, or a different shape of the hat, or some trifling alteration of the hair, may throw a witness entirely off his guard. It was said to be almost dangerous for persons of a certain height, and of a certain color of hair, to be passing the police courts lest they should be arrested, and marched in with others to be identified by witnesses who were extremely anxious to identify somebody or other. This fact seems very clearly established, that the judgment of men, even with regard to the identity of their fellow creatures, is very far from being infallible.

Turning to the moral universe, identity there is far more difficult to be made out, for both the moral and religious world swarm with pretenders. You cannot know for certain who among your acquaintances is a Christian and who is not. This is known to God, and may be revealed to each man for himself; but deception is so easy, and is nowadays practiced in so masterly a manner, that I know it is difficult to know a son of God from a son of Belial; you may sit down and commune with an apostle, and find he is a Judas; you may walk side by side with one who seemed to be a Simon Peter, and prove him to be a Simon Magus; yes, what is worse, you may be deceived about yourself, and whereas you may have thought your body to be a temple of the Holy Spirit, you may suddenly discover it to have been made a den of thieves. Yet this is a very important matter, for if men are not right, and cannot clear their consciences that they are right, they live in a state of perpetual unrest, never at any moment possessing safety. We ought to know—we should never be at peace till we do know—whether we are the children of God or not; and since the outward aspect so often deceives, and visible signs are not to be relied upon, it becomes imperative upon us that we should search deep, and look for signs that will not deceive us, prying into the very core and marrow of our being, till we have resolved the weighty question, whether we are the children of God or the heirs of wrath.

You see the text talks about certain secret *spots*. These are tokens in which men cannot so readily deceive as to their identity. The mother will be able to tell whether this is her child or not by the spot which is known to none but herself. The pretender may be very like her child—the voice may be the voice of Jacob, and the hands may not be dissimilar, and he may be able to relate many things concerning his youth which it would seem that none but the real child could know; but the mother remembers that there was a secret spot, and if that is not there, she turns the pretender aside—but if she discovers that private token, she knows the claimant to be her child. I want, this morning, for us to remember that there are secret marks upon every Christian, and if we have not the spot of God's child too, it will little avail us how fairly in our outward garb and manner we may conform ourselves to the members of the heavenly family.

We have before us a whole host of persons who profess to be the children of the Most High. They are exceedingly confident because they come before us in *the garments* of God's people, but their robes do not deceive us, immediately we tell them that we cannot judge by the outward appearance; for a religious profession is very easily procured: the very brightest colors may be flaunted, and a man's garments may be outwardly spotless and fair to the eye, and yet for all that he may be the basest of pretenders. None wash their hands more often than the Pharisees, and yet they are sepulchers full of rottenness; none say longer prayers than the Scribes, and yet none more ready to devour widows' houses. The outward garb of religion is no criterion by which to judge a man in an age as full of deception as the present, which has been fitly called the era of shams. If a devout exterior will not satisfy us, these professors address us in *the language of piety;* they use the holy speech which is thought decorous among the people of God; but we straightway tell them that albeit if we lived with them, we have no doubt their speech would betray them, when the old brogue of Babylon would come out unawares, yet still their outward public speech can be no rule of judgment to us, for those often talk loudest who know least. The bell rings men to Church, but says no prayers itself: there may be the sign of the angel hanging over the inn door, but the devil may be the landlord within. That sepulcher which is most whitewashed may be full of dead men's bones. Should both garb and language fail to convince us, those who would make a fair show in the flesh, point us to *their actions,* and "In this" they say, "surely we cannot deceive, for 'by their fruits you shall know them.'" We confess that it is even so, we can only judge men by their fruits, and we are not allowed by God's word to judge any further; but men must judge themselves other than by merely outward acts—they must examine their motives and the design and scope by which those acts were dictated and directed, for otherwise they may only possess that superficial morality which is deceptive, because it springs not from the depths of the heart, but is a mere stagnant pool, and not the clear crystal living water welling up from the inmost soul of the man. Men may be externally washed, but not internally quickened; they may be covered with the flowers of right-

eousness, but those flowers may have no root, and by-and-by may wither away because the heart is not right in the sight of God. sirs, we will not be content, this morning, with examining your clothes, nor listening to your speech, nor even with touching your hands, for all these signs may deceive *you,* if they do not deceive us. We ask you to come with us into the stripping room, and let us search for the spots, the secret spots, without which you cannot know to a certainty that you are the true children of the living God!

This morning, as we may be helped by God the Holy Spirit, in solemn downright earnest we mean if we can, first of all, *to take you to the examination of the secret spots;* secondly, *to make a declaration from God's word of what the true spot is;* thirdly, *to discriminate among men as to those public and defiling spots which, alas, are to be found in all of us;* and, then, fourthly, *an exhortation upon the whole subject.*

I. First, then, at the mention of private spots which are to be the insignia of the regenerate, there are thousands who say, "We do not shirk that examination. Truly the signs of saints are in us also! Are others Israelites? So are we. We bear in our bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus—we challenge an investigation." Be it so, then! LET US COMMENCE A MINUTE EXAMINATION.

I am not now to deal with anything that is public. We are not speaking now about actions or words, but concerning those secret things which men have judged to be infallible marks of their being saved.

Here is a friend before us, and as he lays bare his heart, he indicates to us the spot which he thinks proclaims him to be a child of God. I will describe it. This man has embraced *sound doctrine;* he has managed by some means to become thoroughly Calvinistic; he holds the doctrine of election in all its length and breadth; he would fight to the last moment of life for any one of the five points of the Calvinistic confession. You cannot find a man more determinedly orthodox; he abhors all teaching which he judges to be uncertain in its soundness; and within his heart he believes that he is therefore saved. "Surely," whispers his vain heart, "surely a man with such a sound creed cannot be cast into hell!" He delights to hear the preacher deal a heavy blow at Arminians, or Ritualists, or any other people who differ from him, because he feels then that the privilege which he has monopolized in his own conceit is thus defended and preserved from all intruders. "Ah," he says, "I am saved; I have received the truth of God, and hold it with all my might." Everywhere he goes, his whole talk is of his favorite Shibboleth, "The truth! The truth! The truth!" Not that the aforesaid truth has ever renewed his nature; not that it has ever changed his moral character; not that it has at all made him a better husband or a kinder father; not that it influences him in trade; not that you could perceive any sanctifying effect proceeding from his creed if you lived with him; but still this is it, orthodoxy, thorough orthodoxy, holding the truth of God and holding it firmly too, and denouncing all others, this is his balm of Gilead to heal all disease, this is his crown of rejoicing in life, and his passport to the skies. Now, sir, we do not hesitate to say concerning you, although you will not be pleased with

us for it, that your spot is not the spot of the children of God. It is a good thing to be sound in the faith, but *that virtue* may belong to the vilest sinner out of hell. There have been some men who have been orthodox to the core, and yet they have been detestable hypocrites, and not one atom better, as their outward life has shown. No form of doctrine, however Scriptural, can ever save the soul if it is only received by the head, and does not work in its mighty energy upon the heart. "You must be born-again," are the Savior's words; and unless you are born-again, your carnal nature may hold the truth of God in the letter without discerning its spirit; and while the truth shall be dishonored by being so held, you yourself shall not be benefited thereby.

But here is another waiting to be searched. He also believes that he has discovered in himself the spot of God's child. It is this—not as common a spot, I believe, in this congregation as in some—a *knowledge of inward corruption.* "Ah," says one, "I know that I am an heir of heaven, because I am aware of the sinfulness of my nature. I know my heart to be horridly depraved; I believe my nature to be detestable and vile, and sometimes I am the subject of frightful blasphemous thoughts, and have inclinations towards the most horrible iniquities. Surely I am a quickened child of God or I would not have so vivid a conviction of indwelling sin! I would not feel that I was as bad as I am if I had not been first of all quickened and awakened!" Now, believe me, there are thousands who are under the delusion that this spot is the spot of God's children, but let me assure them very affectionately that it is no such thing. God's children do have a sense of sin, they groan because of the body of this death, they daily lament the plague of their own heart, but a full persuasion of their own sinfulness may be found in *thousands* who are not God's children. It is a preposterous assumption that for a man to know himself to be a sinner proves him to be a saint. Let me ask the physician whether a sense of sickness proves a man to be cured. Let me ask a drowning man whether a sense of sinking proves that he is rescued. Let me ask a bankrupt debtor whether a sense of being penniless proves that he is rich. You know better; common sense teaches you better! It is not a discovery of your sin that will save you, but hearty faith in the Savior; and if you have not gone further than a mere conviction of sin, which may be nothing but a legal conviction, and a natural alarm at the awful punishment of sin—if you have not gone further than mere alarm or remorse, you have not the spot which marks you out to be a child of God; you may be a Judas crying, "I have sinned," and you may even hang yourself through terror of conscience, and be none the less, but rather all the more, a son of perdition! A cutting truth is this, but it must be told, lest any are misled.

I see before me at the door of the stripping room a third class of persons, who say, "Surely we have this spot, *for we are full of confidence that we are saved;* we believe that we are saved—firmly believe it. We are not among those sinful people who indulge in doubts and fears. We know that we are saved. We have known it for years, and we have never had a doubt about it. If ever a question is raised, 'Do I love the Lord or not? Am

I His or am I not?' we throw the question out—we believe it to come from Satan to mar our peace, and spoil our comfort. We have long ago given up self-examination as an unnecessary disturbing of the peace of our spirits. We have made up our minds that we are saved, and it gives us great peace to believe that we are." Yes; but, my hearers, such a spot is not the spot of God's children, for after this fashion the foolish cry, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." Remember how easy it is to daub with untempered mortar, how readily you may build upon a sandy foundation, and how the superstructure may be run up with marvelous speed if you build with wood, hay, and stubble— you may make a much more fair show with perishable materials than if you waited till you had gold and silver, and precious stones, to slowly build the edifice. But remember that for you to believe that you are saved does not *prove* that you are saved: the poor lunatic in Bedlam believes himself to be a king, but no man acknowledges his sovereignty. Your undisturbed conscience may be no evidence of divine grace, but rather a token of reprobation, for there are some who have received a strong delusion to believe a lie, that they may be damned. They are fooled by Satan into the delusion that they are the people of God, whereas they are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity. Hope is our anchor, but what is the use of an anchor if it has nothing to lay hold upon? "I hope," said one, when he heard of his neighbor's death, "I hope he is all right." And yet he knew that he died drunk. Now, if that man had said, "I wish that there may have been found a way by which it is possible for him to be saved," I could understand it, but to say "I hope," where there was no ground and foundation for hope, was to speak as the foolish speak. You and I ought not to have a hope which will not bear the test. Oh, instead of shirking self-examination, practice it daily; ask for the strong wind from the wilderness to come and smite the four corners of your house, for if it is built upon a rock it will not fall; but, oh, if it is but a sand-built house, it will be far better that it should come down now, than that you should dwell in it for a while with groundless comfort, and find it fall about your ears to all eternity. No, the self-confident assumption that you are saved is not the spot of God's children.

Frequently I meet with others who will say, "We certainly have the private mark of gracious souls, for *we are so happy;* we have such happy feelings when we are worshipping God; we feel so delighted with going up to the assemblies of God's people. Sometimes at the prayer meeting we get so happy and excited we hardly know what to do, and when we sing those delightful revival tunes, we feel so exceedingly blessed." Now this may or may not be from the Spirit of God. God's children are made glad in the House of prayer, but remember, others are made glad besides God's children, for doubtless there have been thousands who have received the word with joy, as our Savior tells us, who are like the seed sown on stony ground, which sprang up rapidly, because it had no depth of earth, but afterwards when the sun had risen, it withered away. Beware of being stony-ground hearers, and above all, let me say to you, beware of placing the slightest dependence upon your attitude and feelings.

The most desponding feelings do not prove that your soul is in peril, for some of those who before God were surest of heaven, have been the least assured of it in their own feelings. The highest and most rapturous feelings of delight do not prove us to be the children of God, for some have had no fear in their death, and their strength has been firm; they have not been in trouble as other men, neither have they been plagued like other men, and yet for all that their end has been destruction. Moab was settled upon his lees, and was not emptied from vessel to vessel, but how terrible was his end! Never, therefore, put any dependence upon your attitude and feelings—let them be what they may; go deeper than the froth of feeling, search in the depths of principle for the priceless pearl of infallible evidence. This spot is not the spot of God's children.

There are others and many, too, who will say, "But at least we can bring a mark which is not to be counterfeited, a sure and certain mark of conversion: there was a happy day when we experienced most extraordinary things." As soon as some people of an excitable temperament begin to narrate their treasured story of marvels, you may anticipate that they are going to tell you that they heard a voice, or saw a vision, or were impressed with this, or saw that; all which may be true or may be imagination, according to the truthfulness and common sense of the speaker. And all this may have a connection with their being saved, for there is no doubt that many have been impressed in dreams, and I will even venture to say by visions and voices. Many men's first religious thoughts have been awakened in them by strange impressions; and, therefore, these things are not to be laughed at; whether they are freaks of the imagination or not I care not, as long as men's minds are awakened, the mode matters but little. But if anybody shall say that the experience of singular impressions, or remarkable emotions proves men to be believers, I must most gravely and solemnly disagree, for alas, there have been thousands who profess to have seen angels who are now with devils, and I do not doubt there are tens of thousands who have fought with devils who are now with angels of light! It is not what you see with these eyes, nor hear with these ears, nor feel with flesh and blood; our religion is spiritual, and is spiritually discerned—not a thing of rhapsody, excitement, and imagination, but a matter of sober thought and meditation; and if you have not something more than a mere day or night of singularities to look back upon, your evidences of divine grace are worthless. I delight to look back upon the day when I was converted to God. Many of you do, and I hope you always will look back upon that happy hour with pleasure when you first turned to the Lord. But I have known what it is to feel, that if I had no reason to believe that I was saved except the remembrance what I felt that day, I should have no solid ground at all. The fact is, brothers and sisters, the spot of God's children is not a thing of yesterday, but an abiding and continual token. The true spot is far more than any memory of the past, as I shall show you, and if you have not *that*, you may have all that you can imagine or invent, but God will repudiate you at the last, saying, "I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity."

II. We now come to the second head. WHAT IS THE TRUE SECRET SPOT WHICH INFALLIBLY IDENTIFIES THE CHILD OF GOD?

Beloved, it were vain presumption, blasphemous arrogance, for me to set myself up as able to tell you this of my own judgment; but God's word reveals it to us, and therefore we may tread surely where we have revelation to be our guide. Now, we are told in the gospel according to John, concerning our Lord—"As many as received Him, to them gave He power [or privilege] to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on His name." Here it is, then, if I have received Christ Jesus into my heart, then I am a child of God. That reception is described in the second clause as a believing on the name of Jesus Christ. If, then, I believe on Jesus Christ's name—that is, simply from my heart trust myself with the crucified, but now exalted, Redeemer, I am a member of the family of the Most High. Whatever else I may not have, if I have this, I have the privilege to become a child of God; but if I have not this, I may have all the other spots I have been speaking of, this morning, which may seem to some to be very great beauty spots, but they are not the spots of the children of God. To strengthen the text we have already given you, let us remind you of another: "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." That is, whoever takes Jesus to be to him his anointed Priest, anointed to offer sacrifice of atonement for him, such a soul is born of God. He who takes this man or that to be his priest, or sets up to offer sacrifice for himself is no child of God, be he what he may; but he who takes the Most High Lord, once slain, but now ever living, to be an anointed Priest unto him, may conclude at once that he has the spot of God's child upon him. Our Lord Jesus puts it in another way. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Here is the matter in a nutshell! Christ appears as a Shepherd to His own sheep, not to others. As soon as He appears, His own sheep perceive Him; they trust Him; they are prepared to follow Him; He knows them, and they know Him—there is a mutual knowledge; He guides them, and they follow Him—there is a constant connection between them. If to put this truth of God positively is not enough, let me remind you how our Savior puts it negatively. When the Jews were rioting around Him, instead of listening to His earnest voice, He turned to them and said, "You believe not, because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you." As much as to say, it is because I have not chosen you, and My divine grace has never looked upon you, it is because the divine life has never throbbed in your bosoms, that you do not believe on Me; for if you had the life of God, and were God's children, you would accept Me at once. This is the one mark, the sure mark, the *only* infallible mark—a hearty faith in the appointed Redeemer!

My dear friends, I doubt not many will say, "That is very simple." My reply is, "Glory be to God, it is simple!" The more simple the plan of salvation, the more evidently it is of God. Are we not told that Babylon, the mother of harlots, has written upon her brow, "Mystery"?—mystery is the mark of the Roman Catholic faith, and the sure symbol of Antichrist. That gospel which is so plain that he who runs may read it, that the way-

faring man, though a fool, need not err therein, this gospel which is preached unto the poor, this gospel which may be understood even by a child, this is the gospel, the glorious gospel of the blessed God which is committed to our trust. What says the apostle? "Seeing then," he says, "that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech." Here is the root of the matter, and if you trust Jesus Christ with all your heart, if you rely upon Him to save you, and if your reliance is such that it touches your heart, and makes you love the man who shed great drops of blood for you, if your faith is such that it operates upon your moral character, compelling you no longer to be an enemy to your good and generous God, then you are saved, for you have the spot of God's child! But "without faith it is impossible to please God." I tell you solemnly that all your generosity, your almsgiving, your Sabbath keeping, your repentance, your prayers, your tears, are all are nothing without faith in Christ! Go heap them up till they make a pyramid as great as that which casts its mighty shadow far down the Libyan Desert, but they are as nothing, things of nothing.

All human excellences, without *faith*, will fly as chaff before the wind when the hour of trial shall come; if trusted in, they are as smoke in the nostrils of the Most High, because they rival the cross of Christ. Go humbly to the cross, look up to Him who suffered there, rely on Him and you shall live; but gad you about as you may to this shrine and to that, and scourge yourselves and deny yourselves this and that, and practice all the austerities you please, you shall be further from God than at the first if you despise the salvation of Jesus Christ. Going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness which is of God by faith, and therefore their spot is not the spot of God's children. But coming simply to Jesus, and resting alone in Him, they have glorified God, and they are themselves proved to be the children of the Most High.

III. I shall now, in the third place, turn to another view of the subject which concerns THE DISCRIMINATION OF DEFILING SPOTS.

The term "spot" as used in the text, will not be read usually as we have read it this morning. It will, no doubt, to most readers suggest the idea of sin, and very properly so—then the text would run thus: the sin of the people mentioned here is not the sin of God's people. There is a difference between their guilt and the offenses of the Lord's chosen. This brings me to the point—there is a discrimination to be made, even as to sinful spots. When God's children are mired and spattered with filth, still there is a difference between them and others. An unhappy thing it is, we cannot mourn too much over it, that evil remains even in the hearts of the regenerate, and that the much fine gold sometimes becomes dim and the glory departs. God's people are a holy people, but they are not a perfect people. They aspire after perfection, but they have not yet attained it. Sometimes, alas, they fall! We believe they never fall finally or totally, but they often fall sorrowfully and foully. But yet the ungodly may not take comfort from the sins of God's people, for *their* spots are not the spots of God's children.

Let us very briefly—we cannot enter into the subject in full this morning—show that there is a difference between the sin of God's people and the sin of others. God forbid that you should imagine that I wish to excuse the sins of believers! In some views, when a believer sins, his sin is worse than that of other men, because he offends against greater light and knowledge; he revolts against greater love and mercy; he flies in the teeth of his profession; he does despite, in a measure, to the cross of Christ, and he brings grievous dishonor upon the name of Jesus whom he professes to serve. Believers cannot sin cheaply. The very least speck on a Christian is more plainly seen than the foulest blot on the ungodly, just as a white dress shows the dirt the sooner. The cleaner the paper, the sooner is the mark perceived; but if the paper is black, there may be many marks and stains, and yet they may not be perceptible. God forbid that we should palliate, excuse, or extenuate the faults of God's people. Sin is a horrible thing, and it is above all things detestable when it lurks in a child of God; yet the sins of God's people do differ from the sins of other men in many important respects; they do not sin with deliberation, and with cool determination, meaning to sin, and sinning for its own sake. The ungodly person knows a thing to be wrong, and therefore does it; he plans it upon his bed; he takes counsel with himself when he shall enjoy this pleasure or indulge that lust, knowing at the same time that the pleasure is evil, and the lust is iniquity. The believer possibly falls into the same sin as the unbeliever, yet not through evil aforethought, but through force of a strong and violent temptation. Had he paused awhile, he would have despised the evil, and turned from it with hatred; but there came upon him a sudden a rush of diabolical power, and he seemed borne away by it, to his own intense grief—a grief which makes him go with broken bones for many a year afterwards. We do not sin willfully nor deliberately; we do not love the way of transgression—blessed be God, we could not run in it with all our heart, for if we saw the evil distinctly before us as such, our spirit in calm consideration would recoil from the mere shadow of it. The child of God does not sin with the pleasure and gusto of other men. When the sheep stumbles, as it may do, into the mire, it is up again and on; but if the swine should fall there, it rolls over, and wallows as in its element. A sinner in his sins is a bird in the air, but the believer in sin is like the fish that leaps for a while into the air, but must be back again or die. Sin cannot be satisfactory to an immortal spirit regenerated by the Holy Spirit, it is poison to it; very soon that poison must be thrown out of the system, for the living child of God cannot endure sin to fester within him. If you sin, you "have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous": but if you sin and love sin, then you are the servant of sin, and not a child of God.

Again, the child of God cannot look back upon sin with any kind of complacency. The ungodly man has this spot, that after the sin he even boasts of it; he will tell others that he enjoyed himself greatly in his wicked sport, and he will gloat over its sweetness, turning the morsel over and over, and rolling it under his tongue like an epicure delighting in a dainty dish. "Ah," he says, "how sweet it is!" As for its being contrary to

God, it makes it all the sweeter to him, or else, "God is not in all his thoughts." But no man or woman of God ever sins without smarting. Very soon conscience wakes, and, as the word of God puts it, "David's heart smote him." It is a horrible knock that the heart gives when it begins to smite. All the men in the world may say what they please as long as my heart does not speak against me; but when conscience says, "It is true; you did it, and you have played the fool," then a Christian hangs his head and retires into the shades to hide himself for a while, for he is ashamed. If you can sin and not weep over it, you are an heir of hell. If you can go into sin, and afterwards feel satisfied to have done so, you are on the road to destruction! If there are no pricks of conscience, no inward torments, no bleeding wounds; if you have no throbs and heaves of a bosom that cannot rest; if your soul never feels filled with wormwood and gall when you know you have done evil, you are no child of God; but if your sins plague you, and your soul abhors them, and takes them with weeping to the cross of Jesus, then the sins which you hate shall never destroy you; that which you loathe shall not be brought against you to condemn you; this shall be set down to the account of your Surety, and not to you, seeing that He was delivered for your offenses, and is raised again for your justification.

The child of God also has this difference in his spots from others—when he knows the spot, and is led to repent of it—it makes him more careful in the future, especially in that respect in which he has erred. Have you not seen him afraid to put one foot before another for fear he should do wrong? He had a fall the other day, and he goes very tenderly, very softly. He is almost afraid to open his mouth now, because he spoke so unadvisedly the other day, and his prayer is, "Lord, open my lips! I dare not open them." He used to be very fast and confident, but notice him now; he has a broken spirit, and speaks with bated breath. He does not hold his head up loftily as he used to do; he thanks God that he is forgiven, feels that he has peace, and he blesses God for it; but he is jealous of himself with holy jealousy. You will not find him mingling with that company which led him astray; he is a burnt child, and dreads the fire. You will see him much more precise with himself than he used to be. He used to be precise with other men and lax with himself; now it is different—he can make excuses for others, but he makes none for himself. His heart now pants to be eminent for that very grace in which he failed, and he gives particular attention to keep watch and ward over that part of the wall through which the invader found entrance.

But I need not enlarge. You who are the children of God must have noticed a difference between your sins now and your sins as they once were; and you cannot but observe, day by day, if you look within, that divine grace has made a change even in those sins in which our evil nature exercises most dominion. But, beloved, the best thing we can do is to keep as far away from evil as possible. We have no right to say, "I may be a child of God, and yet do so-and-so." No! The heir of heaven does not desire to approach the appearance of evil. I am much afraid for some of you who are asking, "Is this wrong, and that wrong?" *Do nothing about*

which you have need to ask a question! Be quite sure about it, or leave it alone. Know you not that inspired word, "Whatever is not of *faith* is sin"—that is, whatever you cannot do with the confidence that you are doing right, is sin to you? Though the deed may be right to other people, if you have any doubt about it yourself, it is evil to you. God grant, dear friends, that we may not be "conformed to the world," but be "transformed by the renewing of our minds." If I knew that there was a leper colony anywhere in the country, I do not think I would want to build my house near it; I would not send for the physician and say, "sir, how far do you think the effect of pestilence might spread? I would like to get as near as I could without actually catching the disease." "No, no!" you say, "if there is a plot of land to be bought where there is no disease in the neighborhood, there let my tent be pitched. It is best to dwell far off from evil." O may God separate us from evil in this world, as we hope to be separated from it in the world to come! There will be a great gulf fixed between it and us in the next world, may there be a wide demarcation now.

IV. My close is AN EXHORTATION, an exhortation to myself and to you to make sure work for eternity, and to make it clear to your own consciences that you are, indeed, the children of God.

Ah, my dear hearers, it is not possible for me to be earnest enough in this matter! I wish I had a tongue like the pen of a ready writer that I might speak to you with power this morning. Yet, perhaps, feebleness of words may give but the greater power in spirit if God the Holy Spirit will press upon the conscience of you all the need and duty of an earnest heart-searching self-examination. A famous case is now pending, in which a person claims to be the son of a deceased baronet. Whether he is or not I suppose will, before long, be decided by the highest authorities; meanwhile the case is pending, a very weighty case for him, for upon the decision will hang his possession or non-possession of vast estates and enormous property. Now, in your case you, many of you, profess to be the children of God, and heaven hangs upon the question of the truthfulness of your profession. Heaven! No, there is a dread alternative, heaven or hell must hang upon the truth or the falsehood of your profession: yes, moreover about those two things there is flung a golden chain of eternity, making each of them weightier than they otherwise would be. A child of God! Then your portion is eternal life! An heir of wrath, even as others! Then your heritage will be eternal death! For a moment, conceive that you are passing into the next world. What will be the trepidation of your spirit if it is then a matter of question? With what alarm will you await the decisive ordeal? "Shall I ascend on wings of joy up to the realms where angels dwell, or must I sink with devils as the companions of my woe, to dwell forever in hell?" What horror to have that question still unanswered! Is it uncertain now, my hearer, is it uncertain now, whether you are a child of God or not? Is it uncertain whether your spot is the spot of God's children? Then let not an hour pass over your head till you have said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" Trifle not here, I plead with you! If you must

trifle anywhere, let it be about some secondary matter; your health, if you will, or the title deeds of your estates; but your souls, your never-dying souls, and their eternal destinies, I beseech you be in earnest here, for you will be in earnest soon, earnestly praising God in heaven, or earnestly moaning out your never-ending sorrow in the pit of hell where hope can never come. God grant us wisdom, then, since so much hangs upon it, not to play the fool by taking things at second hand, but to search to the very roots and foundations of the matter to know whether we are saved or not.

This duty is much more easy to explain than to enforce, and more easy to enforce than to practice. We all shun it. The preacher naturally says to himself, "Have you not preached to others? You may surely excuse yourself." The old member of the church who has long maintained an honorable outward profession, whispers to himself, or Satan whispers to him, "You are an old experienced Christian, why need you go back to the beginning and do your first works?" The young professor in the heyday of his zeal, says within himself, "I know that it is right with me." But ah, I pray you remember, he who takes things too quickly as being what he desires them to be, will be deceived in the end. "The heart is deceitful above all things," says the prophet, "and desperately wicked," and will you not believe it? Examine it and cross-examine it, for it is a lying witness. Believe it to be dishonest and try to prove it so, and if haply you should be unable, then what a comfort to you! But to believe your heart to be honest and sound, why this is to begin where the *fool* does, at the wrong end of the chapter! Suspect yourself, and go to Christ this morning as a sinner. Doubt yourself, and go to Jesus. *Never doubt Him!* Confess yourself now to be undone and ruined if it is so, but go to Him who is *still* the Savior, able to save to the uttermost. Still guilty, still lost, still defiled, go still to the "fountain filled with blood": go, still, to the open-handed Savior, and ask Him to press you to His bosom and to save you now. This is the quick way, the sure way, the blessed way of finding out the secret spot—to go at once to Christ. If I never came before, O bleeding Savior, now I come, and if I have often come and put my trust in You, I come again—accept a guilty sinner who casts himself alone on You, and save him for Your mercy's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HEBREWS 4.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

CHRISTUS ET EGO
NO. 781

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 17, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."
Galatians 2:20.

IN great ranges of mountains there are lofty peaks which pierce the clouds, but, on the other hand, there are, here and there, lower parts of the range which are crossed by travelers, become national highways, and afford passages for commerce from land to land. My text rises before my contemplation like a lofty range of mountains, a very Andes for elevation. I shall not attempt, this morning, to climb the summits of its sublimity: we have not the time, and we fear we have not the skill for such work, but I shall, to the best of my ability, conduct you over one or two practical truths of God which may be serviceable to us this morning, and introduce us to sunny fields of contemplation.

I. At once to our work. I call upon you to observe very carefully, in the first place, THE PERSONALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION *as it is exhibited in the text before us.*

How many personal pronouns of the first person are there in this verse? Are there not as many as eight? It swarms with *I* and *me*. The text deals not with the plural at all; it does not mention someone else, nor a third party far away, but the apostle treats of himself, his own inner life, his own spiritual death, the love of Christ to *him*, and the great sacrifice which Christ made for *him*. "Who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me."* This is instructive, for it is a distinguishing mark of the Christian religion that it brings out a man's individuality. It does not make us selfish, on the contrary, it cures us of that evil, but still it does manifest in us a selfhood by which we become conscious of our personal individuality in an eminent degree. In the nocturnal heavens there have long been observed bright masses of light: the astronomers called them "nebulae"; they supposed them to be stores of shapeless chaotic matter, until the telescope of Herschell resolved them into distinct stars. What the telescope did for stars, the religion of Christ, when received into the heart, does for men. Men think of themselves as mixed up with the race, or swamped in the community, or absorbed in universal manhood; they have a very indistinct idea of their separate obligations to God, and their personal relations to His government, but the gospel, like a telescope, brings man out to himself, makes him see himself as a separate existence, and compels him to meditate upon his own sin, his own salvation, and his own personal doom unless saved by divine grace. In the broad road there are so many travelers, that as one takes a bird's eye view of it, it appears to be filled with a vast mob of men moving without order; but

in the straight and narrow way which leads to eternal life, every traveler is distinct; he attracts your notice; he is a marked man. Having to go against the general current of the times, the believer is an individual upon whom observant eyes are fixed. He is a distinct individual, both to himself and the rest of his kind. You will very readily see how the religion of Jesus Christ brings out a man's individuality *in its very dawn;* it reveals to him his own personal sin and consequent danger. You know nothing about conversion if you merely believe in human depravity and human ruin, but have never felt that *you* are depraved, and that *you yourself* are ruined. Over and above all the general woes of the race, there will be one particular woe of your own, if you have been convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit; you will cry, like that shrill-voiced prophet of Jerusalem, in the days of the siege, "Woe unto myself also!" You will feel as if the arrows of God were mainly aimed at you, and as if the curses of the law would surely fall upon you if upon none else. Certainly, beloved hearer, you know nothing about salvation unless you have *personally looked with your own eye to Jesus Christ.* There must be a personal reception of the Lord Jesus into the arms of your faith, and into the bosom of your love; and, if you have not trusted in the crucified while standing alone in contemplation at the foot of the cross, you have not believed unto life eternal.

Then, in consequence of a separate personal faith, the believer enjoys *a personal peace;* he feels that if the earth were all at arms, he would still find rest in Christ, that rest being peculiarly his own, independently of his fellows. He may talk of that peace to others, but he cannot communicate it; others cannot give it to him, nor can they take it from him. Wherever the Christian religion is truly in the soul, it soon leads to *a personal consecration* to God. The man comes to the altar of Christ, and he cries, "Here I am; O most glorious Lord, I feel it to be my reasonable service to give spirit, soul, and body, to You. Let others do as they will; as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The renewed man feels that the work of others does not exonerate him from service, and the general lukewarmness of the Christian church cannot be an excuse for his own indifference. He stands out against error, if necessary, as a lone protestor, like Athanasius, crying, "I, Athanasius, against the whole world," or he works for God in the building up of Jerusalem, like Nehemiah, being content to work alone if others will not assist him. He has discovered himself to have been personally lost, and to have been personally saved, and now his prayer is, "Lord, show me what You would have *me* do; here am *I,* send *me."* I believe that in proportion as our piety is definitely in the first person singular, it will be strong and vigorous. I believe, moreover, that in proportion as we fully realize our personal responsibility to God, shall we be likely to discharge it; but, if we have not really understood it, we are very likely to dream of work for God by proxy—to pay the priest or the minister to be useful for us, and act as if we could shift our responsibility from our own shoulders to the back of a society or a church. From its dawn up to its noonday glory, the personality of true godliness is most observable. All the teaching of our holy faith bears in this direction. We preach personal election, personal calling, personal regeneration, personal perseverance, personal holiness, and we know noth-

ing of any work of divine grace which is not personal to the professor of it. There is no doctrine in Scripture which teaches that one man can be saved by the godliness of another. I cannot discover anything like salvation by sponsorship, except in the one case of the sponsorship of the Lord Jesus Christ. I find no human being placed in the place of another, so as to be able to take another's burden of sin, or perform another's duty. I do find that we are to bear one another's burdens in respect of sympathy, but not in the sense of substitution. Every man must bear his own burden, and give an account for himself before God. Moreover, the ordinances of the Christian religion teach us the same. When a man is typically buried with Christ by the public act of baptism, he cannot be dead for another or buried for another, nor can he rise again instead of another. There is the personal act of immersion to show forth our personal death to the world, personal burial with Christ, and personal resurrection with Him. So also, in the supper of the Lord, the distinct act of each man eating and drinking for himself, most manifestly sets forth that we stand as individuals before the Lord our God in our connection with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I feel earnestly that nothing should ever spoil the effect of this truth of God upon our minds. It is such a simple truth, that when I make the statement, you perhaps wonder that I should repeat it so often; but simple as it is, it is constantly being forgotten. How many church members shelter themselves behind the vigorous action of the entire community? The church is being increased, the church opens schools, the church builds new houses of prayer, and so the church member flatters himself that he is doing something, whereas that very man may not have, either by his contributions, his prayers, or his personal teachings, done anything at all! O idle church member, I beseech you shake yourself from the dust; be not so mean as to appropriate other men's labors. Before your own Master, you shall stand or fall upon your own individual service or neglect, and if you bring forth no fruit yourself, all the fruit upon the other branches shall not help you. "Every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." "Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away."

Common enough is it, also, for persons to shelter themselves behind a society. A small annual contribution has often been a cloak for gross indifference to holy effort. Somebody else is paid to be a *missionary*, and to do your mission-work—is this the Lord's way? Is this the path of obedience? Does not our Lord say to me, "As my Father has sent Me, even so I send you"? Now, the Father did not send Christ that He might procure a proxy and be a nominal Redeemer, but Jesus gave Himself for us in personal service and sacrifice—even so does Jesus send us forth to suffer and to serve. It is well to support the minister; it is well to pay the city missionary that he may have his time to give to necessary work; it is well to assist the Bible-woman that she may go from house to house, but remember, when all the societies have done all that is possible, they cannot exonerate you from your own peculiar calling, and however large your contributions to assist others to serve the Master, they cannot discharge on your behalf one single particle of what was due from you personally to your Lord. Let me ask you, brothers and sisters, if you have

ever sheltered behind the work of others, to stand forth in your own proper character, and remember that before God you will be estimated by what *you* have felt, what *you* have known, what you have *learned*, and what you have DONE!

The worst form of the mischief is when persons imagine that family piety and national religion can ever be available in lieu of individual repentance and faith. Absurd as it may seem, yet a very common thing it is for people to say, "Oh, yes, we are all Christians! Of course, we are all Christians—every Englishman is a Christian! We do not belong to the Hindus or Muslims—we are all Christians!" What grosser lie can a man invent than that? Is a man a Christian because he lives in England? Is a rat a horse because it lives in a stable? That is just as good reasoning. A man must be born-again, or he is no child of God. A man must have living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, or else he is no Christian, and he does but mock the name of Christian when he takes it upon himself without having part or lot in the matter.

Others say, "My mother and my father always professed such a religion, therefore I am bound to do the same." glorious reasoning, fit most surely for idiots! Have you never heard of that old Pagan monarch who professed conversion, and was about to step into the baptismal font, when, turning round to the bishop, he said, "Where did my father go when he died, before your religion came here, and where did his father go, and all the kings that were before me who worshipped Woden and Thor? Where did they go when they died? Tell me at once!" The bishop shook his head, and looked very sorrowful, and said he was afraid they were gone to a very dark place. "Ah, then," said he, "I will not be separated from them." Back he went, and remained an unwashed heathen. You suppose that this folly expired in the dark ages? It survives and flourishes in the present. We have known persons impressed under the gospel, who have nevertheless clung to the false hopes of superstition or human merit, and have excused themselves by saying, "You see, I have always been brought up to it." Does a man think because his mother was poor, or his father a pauper, that he himself must necessarily remain a beggar? If my father was blind, am I bound to put out my own eyes to be like he? No, but if I have beheld the light of the truth of Jesus Christ, let me follow it, and not be drawn aside by the idea that hereditary superstition is any the less dangerous or erroneous because a dozen generations have been deluded by it. You must appear before God, my dear friend, on your own feet, and neither mother nor father can stand in your place, therefore judge for yourself; seek for yourself eternal life; lift up your eyes to Christ's cross for yourself, and let it be your own earnest endeavor that you yourself may be able to say, "He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me."* We are all born alone—we come as sorrowful pilgrims into this world to traverse a path which only our own feet can tread. To a great extent we go through the world alone, for all our companions are but vessels sailing with us side by side, vessels distinct and each one bearing its own flag. Into the depth of our hearts no man can dive. There are cabinets in the chamber of the soul which no man can open but the individual himself. We must die alone, friends may surround the bed, but the departing spirit must take its flight by itself. We shall hear no tramp of thousands

as we descend into the dark river. We shall be solitary travelers into the unknown land. We expect to stand before the judgment seat in the midst of a great assembly, but still to be judged as if no other man were there. If all that multitude is condemned, and we are in Christ, we shall be saved, and if they should all be saved, and we are found wanting, we shall be cast away. In the balances we shall each be placed alone. There is a crucible for every ingot of gold, a furnace for every bar of silver. In the resurrection every seed shall receive his own body. There shall be an individuality about the frame that shall be raised in that day of wonders, an individuality most marked and manifest. If I am condemned at the last, no man can be damned for my spirit; no soul can enter the chambers of fire on my behalf, to endure for me the unutterable anguish. And, blessed hope, if I am saved, it will be *I* who shall see the King in His beauty: my eyes shall behold Him, and not another in my place. The joys of heaven shall not be proxy joys, but the personal enjoyments of those who have had personal union with Christ. You all know this, and therefore, I pray you, let the weighty truth abide with you. No man in his senses thinks that another can eat for him, or drink for him, or be clothed for him, or sleep for him, or wake for him. No man is content nowadays with a second person's owning money for him, or possessing an estate for him; men long to have riches themselves; they wish to be personally happy, to be personally honored; they do not care that the good things of this life shall be nominally theirs, while other men grasp the reality; they wish to have a real grasp and grip of all temporal goods. O let us not play the fool with eternal things, but let us desire to have a personal interest in Christ, and then let us aspire to give to Him, who deserves it so well, our personal service, rendering spirit, soul, and body, unto His cause.

II. Secondly, our text very plainly TEACHES US THE INTERWEAVING OF OUR OWN PROPER PERSONALITY WITH THAT OF JESUS CHRIST.

Read the text over again. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Here is the man, but here is the Son of God quite as conspicuously, and the two personalities are *singularly interwoven*. I think I see two trees before me. They are distinct plants growing side by side, but as I follow them downward, I observe that the roots are so interlaced and intertwisted that no one can trace the separate trees and allot the members of each to its proper whole. Such are Christ and the believer. I think I see before me a vine. Yonder is a branch, distinct and perfect as a branch; it is not to be mistaken for any other, it is a branch, a whole and perfect branch, yet how perfectly is it joined to the stem, and how completely is its individuality merged in the one vine of which it is a member! Now, so is it with the believer in Christ.

There was one parent who threw his shadow across our path, and from whose influence we never could escape. From all other men we might have struggled away and claimed to be separate, but this one man was part of ourselves, and we part of him—Adam the first, in his fallen state: we are fallen with him, and are broken in pieces in his ruin. And now, glory be to God, as the shadow of the first man has been uplifted

from us, there appears a second man, the Lord from heaven; and across our path there falls the light of His glory and His excellence, from which also, blessed be God, we who have believed in Him cannot escape: in the light of that man, the second Adam, the heavenly federal head of all His people—in His light we rejoice. Interwoven with our history and personality is the history and personality of the man Christ Jesus, and we are forever one with Him.

Observe the points of contact. First Paul says, *"I am crucified with Christ";* what does he mean? He means a great many more things than I can tell you this morning; but, briefly, he means this—he believed in the representation of Christ on the cross; he held that when Jesus Christ hung upon the tree, He did not hang there as a private person, but as the *representative* of all His chosen people. As the burgess in the House of Commons votes not for himself, alone, but in the name of the township which has sent him to Parliament, so the Lord Jesus Christ acted in what He did as a great public representative person, and the dying of Jesus Christ upon the tree was the virtual dying of all His people. Then all His saints rendered unto justice what was due, and made expiation to divine vengeance for all their sins. *"I am crucified with Christ."* The apostle of the Gentiles delighted to think that as one of Christ's chosen people; he died upon the tree in Christ. He did more than believe this doctrinally, however, he accepted it confidently, resting his hope upon it. He believed that by virtue of Jesus Christ's death, he had himself paid the law its due, satisfied divine justice, and found reconciliation with God. Beloved, what a blessed thing it is when the soul can, as it were, stretch itself upon the cross of Christ and feel "I am dead; the law has killed me, cursed me, slain me, and I am therefore free from its power, because in my Surety I have borne the curse, and in the person of my Substitute all that the law could do, by way of condemnation, has been executed upon me, for I am crucified with Christ." Oh, how blessed it is when the cross of Christ is laid upon us, how it quickens us! Just as the aged prophet went up and stretched himself upon the dead child, put his mouth upon the child's mouth, and his hands upon the child's hands, and his feet upon the child's feet and then the child was quickened, so when the cross is laid upon my soul, it puts life, power, warmth, and comfort into me. Union with the suffering, bleeding Savior, and faith in the merit of the Redeemer, are soul-cheering things: O for more enjoyment of them! Paul meant even more than this. He not only believed in Christ's death and trusted in it, but he actually felt its power in himself in causing the crucifixion of his old corrupt nature. If you conceive of yourself as a man executed, you at once perceive that, being executed by the law, the law has no further claim upon you; you resolve, moreover, that having once proven the curse of sin by the sentence passed upon you, you will not fall into that same offense again, but henceforth, being miraculously delivered from the death into which the law brought you, you will live in newness of life. You will feel so if you feel rightly. Thus did Paul view himself as a criminal upon whom the sentence of the law had been fulfilled. When he saw the pleasures of sin, he said, "I cannot enjoy these: I am dead to them. I once had a life in which these were very sweet to me, but I have been crucified with Christ; consequently, as a dead man can have

no delight in the joys which once were delights to him, so neither can I." When Paul looked upon the carnal things of the world, he said, "I once allowed these things to reign over me. What shall I eat? What shall I drink? And with what shall I be clothed? These were a trinity of questions of the utmost importance—they are of no importance now because I am dead to these things; I cast my care upon God with regard to them; they are not my life. I am crucified to them." If any passion, if any motive, if any design should come into our mind short of the cross of Christ, we should exclaim, "God forbid that I should glory in any of these things; I am a dead man. Come, world, with all your witchery; come, pleasure, with all your charms; come, wealth, with all your temptations; come, all you tempters that have seduced so many; what can you do with a crucified man? How can you tempt one who is dead to you?" Now, it is a blessed state of mind when a man can feel that through having received Christ, he is, to this world, as one who is utterly dead. Neither does he yield his strength to its purposes, nor his soul to its customs, nor his judgment to its maxims, nor his heart to its affections, for he is a crucified man through Jesus Christ; the world is crucified unto him, and he unto the world. This is what the apostle meant.

Notice next another point of contact. He says, *"Nevertheless I live,"* but then he corrects himself, *"yet not I, but Christ lives in me."* You have seen the dead side of a believer: he is deaf, and dumb, and blind, and without feeling to the sinful world, yet he adds, "Nevertheless I live." He explains what his life is—his life is produced in him by virtue of Christ's being in him and his being in Christ. Jesus is the source of the Christian's life. The sap in the vine lives even in the smallest of the tendrils. No matter how minute may be the nerve; the anatomist will tell you that the brain-life lives in its most distant extremity. So in every Christian; though the Christian may be insignificant, and possessed of little divine grace, yet still, if he is truly a believer, Jesus lives in him. The life which keeps his faith, his hope, and his love in existence comes from Jesus Christ and from Him alone. We would cease to be living saints if we did not daily receive divine grace from our covenant Head; as the strength of our life comes from the Son of God, so is He the ruler and moving power within us. How can he be a Christian who is ruled by any but Christ? If you call Christ, "Master and Lord," you must be His servant; nor can you yield obedience to any rival power, for no man can serve two masters. There must be a master-spirit in the heart; and unless Jesus Christ is such a master-spirit to us, we are not saved at all. The life of the Christian is a life which springs from Christ, and it is controlled by His will. Beloved, do you know anything about this? I am afraid it is dry talking to you about it unless you feel it. Has your life been such during the past week? Has the life which you have lived been Christ's living in you? Have you been like a book printed in plain letters, in which men might read a new edition of the life of Jesus Christ? A Christian ought to be a living photograph of the Lord Jesus, a striking likeness of his Lord. When men look at him they should see not only what the Christian is, but what the Christian's Master is, for he should be like his Master. Do you ever see and know that within your soul Christ looks out of your eyes, regarding poor sinners and considering how you may help them? That Christ

throbs in your heart, feeling for the perishing, trembling for those who will not tremble for themselves? Do you ever feel Christ opening your hands in generous charity to help those who cannot help themselves? Have you ever felt that a something more than yourself was in you, a Spirit which sometimes struggles with yourself, and holds it by the throat and threatens to destroy its sinful selfishness—a noble Spirit which puts its foot upon the neck of covetousness, a brave Spirit that dashes to the ground your pride, an active fervent Spirit that burns up your sloth? Have you ever felt this? Truly, we who live unto God feel the life of God within, and desire to be more and more subdued under the dominant Spirit of Christ, that our manhood may be a palace for the Well-beloved! That is another point of contact.

Further on, the apostle says—and I hope you will keep your Bibles open to follow the text—*"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God."* Every moment the life of the Christian is to be a life of faith. We make a mistake when we try to walk by feeling or by sight. I dreamed the other night, while musing upon the life of the believer that I was passing along a road which a divine call had appointed for me. The ordained pathway which I was called to traverse was thick darkness, unmingled with a ray of light. As I stood in the awful gloom, unable to perceive a single inch before me, I heard a voice which said, "Let your feet go right on. Fear not, but advance in the name of God." So on I went, putting down foot after foot with trembling. After a little while the path through the darkness became easy and smooth from use and experience; just then I perceived that the path turned: it was of no use my endeavoring to proceed as I had done before; the way was tortuous, and the road was rough and stony: but I remembered what was said, that I was to advance as I could, and so on I went. Then there came another twist, and yet another, and another, and another, and I wondered why, till I understood that if ever the path remained long the same, I would grow accustomed to it, and so would walk by feeling; and I learned that the whole of the way would constantly be such as to compel me to depend upon the guiding voice, and exercise faith in the unseen One who had called me. All of a sudden it appeared to me as though there was nothing beneath my foot when I put it down, yet I thrust it out into the darkness in confident daring, and lo, a firm step was reached, and another, and another, as I walked down a staircase which descended deep, down, down, down. Onward I passed, not seeing an inch before me, but believing that all was well, although I could hear around me the screams of falling men and women who had walked by the light of their own lanterns, and missed their foothold. I heard the cries and shrieks of men as they fell from this dreadful staircase; but I was commanded to go right on, and I went straight on, resolved to be obedient even if the way should descend into the nethermost hell. By-and-by the dreadful ladder was ended, and I found a solid rock beneath my feet, and I walked straight on upon a paved causeway, with a railing on either side. I understood this to be the experience which I had gained, which now could guide and help me, and I leaned on this rail, and walked on right confidently till, in a moment, my causeway ended and my feet sank in the mire, and as for my other comforts, I groped for them, but they were gone, for still I was to know

that I must go in dependence upon my unseen Friend, and the road would always be such that no experience could serve me instead of dependence upon God. Forward I plunged through mire and filth and suffocating smoke, and a smell as of death, for it was *the* way, and I had been commanded to walk there. Again the pathway changed, though all was midnight still—up went the path, and up, and up, and up, with nothing upon which I could lean; I wearily ascended innumerable stairs, not one of which I could see, although the very thought of their height might make my brain reel. All of a sudden my pathway burst into light, as I woke from my daydream, and when I looked down upon it, I saw it all to be safe, but such a road that, if I had seen it, I never could have walked it. It was only in the darkness that I could have performed my mysterious journey, only in child-like confidence upon the Lord. The Lord will guide us if we are willing to do just as He bids us. Lean upon Him, then! I have painted a poor picture, but still one which, if you can understand, it will be grand to look upon. To walk straight on, believing in Christ every moment, believing your sins to be forgiven even when you see their vileness, believing that you are safe in Christ even when you seem in the utmost danger, believing that you are glorified with Christ when you feel as if you were cast out from God's presence—this is the life of faith.

Furthermore, Paul notes other points of unity. *"Who loved me."* Blessed be God, before the mountains uplifted their snow-crowned heads to the clouds, Christ had set His heart upon us. His "delights were with the sons of men." In His "book all our members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." believer, get a hold of the precious truth that Christ loved you eternally—the all-glorious Son of God chose you, and espoused you unto Himself, that you might be His bride throughout eternity. Here is a blessed union indeed!

Observe the next, *"and gave Himself for me";* not only gave all that He had, but gave Himself; not merely laid aside His glory, and His splendor, and His life, but yielded up His very self. O heir of heaven, Jesus is yours at this moment. Having given Himself once for you upon the cross to put your sin away, at this moment He gives Himself to you to be your life, your crown, your joy, your portion, your all in all! You have found yourself to be a separate personality and individuality, but that personality is linked with the person of Christ Jesus, so that you are in Christ, and *Christ* is in you; by a blessed indissoluble union you are knit together forever and ever.

III. Lastly, the text *describes* THE LIFE WHICH RESULTS FROM THIS BLENDED PERSONALITY.

If you will have patience with me, I will be as brief as I can while I go over the text again, word by word. Brothers and sisters, when a person finds and knows himself to be linked with Christ, his life is altogether *a new life.* I gather that from the expression, "I am crucified, nevertheless I live." crucified, then dead; crucified, then the old life is put away—whatever life a crucified man has must be new life. So is it with you. Upon your old life, believer, sentence of death has been pronounced. The carnal mind, which is enmity against God, is doomed to die. You can say,

"I die daily." Would to God the old nature were completely dead. But whatever you have of life was not given you till you came into union with Christ. It is a new thing, as new as though you had been actually dead and rotted in the tomb, and then had started up at the sound of the trumpet to live again. You have received a life from above, a life which the Holy Spirit worked in you in regeneration. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, but your grace-life did not come from yourself—you have been born-again from above.

Your life is *a very strange one*—"I am crucified, nevertheless I live." What a contradiction! The Christian's life is a matchless riddle. No worldling can comprehend it; even the believer himself cannot understand it. He knows it, but as to solving all its enigmas, he feels that to be an impossible task. Dead, yet alive; crucified with Christ, and yet at the same time risen with Christ in newness of life! Do not expect the world to understand you, Christian, it did not understand your Master. When your actions are misrepresented, and your motives are ridiculed, do not be surprised. "If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." If you belonged to the village, the dogs would not bark at you. If men could read you, they would not wonder; it is because you are written in a celestial language that men cannot comprehend you, and think you worthless. Your life is new; your life is strange.

This wonderful life, resulting in the blended personality of the believer and the Son of God, is *a true life.* This is expressed in the text, "Nevertheless I live"—yes, live as I never lived before. When the apostle declares himself to be dead to the world, he would not have us imagine that he was dead in the highest and best sense; no, he lived with a new force and vigor of life. It seemed to me, brothers and sisters, when I woke up to know Christ, that I was just like the fly newly burst from the chrysalis—I then began to *really* live. When a soul is startled by the thunderclaps of conviction, and afterwards receives pardon in Christ, it begins to live. The worldling says he needs to see life, and therefore plunges into sin! Fool that he is, he peers into the sepulcher to discover immortality. The man who truly lives is the believer. Shall I become less active because I am a Christian? God forbid! Become less industrious, and find less opportunities for the manifestation of my natural and spiritual energies? God forbid! If ever a man should be as a sword too sharp for the scabbard, with an edge which cannot be turned, it should be the Christian; he should be like flames of fire burning his way. Live while you live. Let there be no driveling and frittering away of time. Live so as to demonstrate that you possess the noblest form of life.

Clear is it, also, that the new life which Christ brings to us is a life of *self-denial,* for Paul adds, "I live, yet not I." Lowliness of mind is part and parcel of godliness. He who can take any credit to himself knows not the spirit of our holy faith. The believer, when he prays best, says, "Yet not I, but the Spirit of God interceded in me." If he has won any souls to Christ, he says, "Yet not I; it was the gospel; the Lord Jesus worked mightily in me." "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all

the praise." Self-humiliation is the native spirit of the true-born child of God!

Further, the life which Christ works in us is a life of *one idea.* Is the believer's soul ruled by two things? No, he knows but one. Christ lives in me; two tenants in the chamber of my soul? No, one Lord and Master I serve. "Christ lives in me." An old divine desired that he might eat and drink and sleep eternal life. You thus live! Alas, I mourn that I live too much in the old life, and too little does Jesus live in me; but the Christian, if he should ever come to perfection, and God grant we each may come as near to it as possible even now, will find that the old, *"I live,"* is kept under, and the new Christ-life reigns supreme. Christ must be the one thought, the one idea, the one master-thought in the believer's soul. When he wakes in the morning the healthy believer inquires, "What can I do for Christ?" When he goes about his business he asks, "How shall I serve my Lord in all my actions?" When he makes money he questions himself, "How can I use my talents for Christ?" If he acquires education, the inquiry is, "How can I spend my knowledge for Christ?"

To sum up much in little, the child of God has within him *the Christ-life;* but how shall I describe that? Christ's life on earth was the divine mingled with the human—such is the life of the Christian; there is something divine about it: it is a living, incorruptible seed, which abides forever. We are made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, yet our life is a thoroughly human life. The Christian is a man among men; in all that is manly he labors to excel, yet he is not as other men are, but wears a hidden nature which no mere worldling understands. Picture the life of Christ on earth, beloved, and that is what the life of God in us ought to be, and will be in proportion as we are subject to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Notice again, keeping close to the text, that the life which God works in us is still *the life of a man.* "The life that I now live in the flesh," says the apostle. Those monks and nuns who run away from the world for fear its temptations should overcome them, and seclude themselves for the sake of greater holiness, are as excellent soldiers as those who retire to the camp for fear of being defeated. Of what service are such soldiers in the battle, or such persons in the warfare of life? Christ did not come to make monks of us: He came to make *men* of us! He meant that we should learn how to live *in the flesh.* We are neither to give up business nor society, nor in any right sense to give up life. "The life I live in the flesh," says the apostle. Look at him busy at his tent-making. What? An apostle making tents? What would you say, brothers and sisters, to the Archbishop of Canterbury stitching away for his living? It is too low for a state bishop certainly, but not too low for Paul! I do not think the apostle was ever more apostolic than when he picked up sticks. When Paul and his companions were shipwrecked at Melita, the apostle was of more service than all the Pan-Anglican Synod with their silk aprons, for he set to work like other people to gather fuel for the fire; he wanted to warm himself as other men, and therefore he took his share at the toil. Even so you and I must take our turn at the wheel. We must not think of keeping ourselves aloof from our fellow men as though we would be degraded by mingling with them. The salt of the earth should be well rubbed into the

meat, and so the Christian should mingle with his fellow men, seeking their good for edification. We are men, and whatever men may lawfully do, we do; wherever they may go, we may go. Our religion makes us neither more nor less than human, though it brings us into the family of God. Yet the Christian life is a life of *faith*. "The life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Faith is not a piece of confectionery to be put upon drawing room tables, or a garment to be worn on Sundays; it is a *working* principle to be used in the barn and in the field, in the shop and on the exchange; it is a grace for the housewife and the maid; it is for the House of Commons and for the poorest workshop. "The life which I live in the flesh, I live by faith." I would have the believing cobbler mend shoes religiously, and tailors make garments by faith, and I would have every Christian buy and sell by faith. Whatever your trades may be, faith is to be taken into your daily callings, and that is alone the truly living faith which will bear the practical test. You are not to stop at the shop door and take off your coat and say, "Farewell to Christianity till I put up the shutters again." That is hypocrisy; but the genuine life of the Christian is the life which we live *in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God!*

To conclude: the life which comes out of the blended personality of the believer and Christ is a life of *perfect love*. "He gave Himself for me." My question is, therefore, What can I do for Him? The new life is a life of *holy security*, for, if Christ loved me, who can destroy me? It is a life of *holy wealth*, for, if Christ gave His infinite self to me, what can I need? It is a life of *holy joy*, for, if Christ is mine, I have a well of holy joy within my soul! It is *the life of heaven*, for, if I have Christ, I have that which is the essence and soul of heaven!

I have talked mysteries, of which some of you have not understood so much as one sentence. God give you understanding that you may know the truth. But if you have not understood it, let this fact convince you—you know not the truth because you have not the Spirit of God; for the spiritual mind alone understands spiritual things. When we talk about the inner life, we seem like those who dote and dream to those who understand us not. But if you have understood me, believer, go home and live out the truth of God, practice that which is practicable, feed upon that which is full of savor, rejoice in Christ Jesus that you are one with Him, and then, in your own proper person, go out and *serve your Master* with might and main, and the Lord send you His abundant blessing. Amen and Amen!

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST!

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

SAVING KNOWLEDGE
NO. 782

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 24, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, Give Me a drink; you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."
John 4:10.

THE matter will turn, this morning, upon those few words, "If you knew the gift of God." The woman of Samaria, who was met by our Lord at the well, was an object of electing love but she was not yet regenerated. One difficulty alone lay in the way—she was willing to receive the truth of God, perfectly willing to be obedient to it; but ignorance lay like a stone before the door of her sepulcher. "If you knew the gift of God," says Christ, "then you would have asked, and I would have given." There was the one barrier; if that could be removed, she would be a saved soul. The impediment which lay so much in her way was ignorance concerning the Lord Jesus Himself. She was not an uninstructed woman. She was evidently acquainted at least with portions of Biblical history; she could speak of "Father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank there himself, and his children, and his cattle." She was versed certainly in the peculiarities of her sect; "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask for a drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." She was equally well acquainted with the hopes which were common to her people and to the Jewish nation—"I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things." She was not, therefore, kept out of the kingdom on account of ignorance. In these matters she was better instructed than, I am afraid, are some of you—for, alas, in this age there are hundreds of people who are educated in everything except their Bibles—who could answer questions upon most sciences, but concerning Christ crucified, they know not even so much as the very elements! But the point which kept this woman, I say, out of the kingdom was this, that she did not know Christ; she knew not "the gift of God," and who it was that said to her, "Give Me a drink." And this, indeed, is enough to keep any of us out of peace, and life, and joy, for, until we know God in human flesh, we cannot find peace and comfort. The great riddle of, "What must I do to be saved?" remains unsolved till we know Christ, and are found in Him. We may go about, and we may study this, and that, and the other, but we shall remain fools in the matters of eternal salvation until we come and sit at the feet of the great Teacher, and know Him, and are known of Him.

I shall attempt, this morning, as God may help me, to speak with you upon spiritual ignorance, upon what would follow if that ignorance were

removed, hoping that I may be allowed to say a few stirring things to some of you, to induce you to get rid of any ignorance which now bars you out of peace, and that others of you who know the truths of Jesus Christ, may be more earnest to tell to the unenlightened what you know yourselves, lest they should perish and their blood should be required at your hands.

I shall commence, then, this morning, by some few remarks upon *the gift of God and the knowledge of it;* and then, secondly, I shall turn to *the "if" of the text, and what then?* And, thirdly, I shall take up *the "if" of the text once more, and show what it has to do with the believer.*

I. First, our text speaks of A GIFT AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF IT.

The latter half of the verse informs us that the gift of God is no other than the Man who spoke to the woman and said, "Give me a drink." In fact, Jesus Christ is "God's unspeakable gift" for whom we should daily and hourly lift up our hearts in gratitude to God. Christ was God's gift to the fallen seed of man. Long before this world was made, He ordained in His eternal purpose that Christ should be the covenant Head of His elect, their Surety, and their Redeemer: He gave Christ to us before He spread the starry sky: He was the Father's goodly gift when the fullness of time was come. Many promises had heralded the Master's coming, and at last He appeared, a baby of a span long in His mother's arms. His holy life and His suffering death were the gifts of God to us, for "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." To the whole company of God's elect, Christ Jesus is the priceless gift which the Father's love has bestowed upon them. And when you and I receive Jesus Christ into our heart, He evermore comes as a gift. The faith by which we receive Him is a gift—the gift of God is faith, but Jesus Christ Himself never comes to a soul that has faith, as a reward. No man ever received Christ by the works of the law or the deeds of the flesh. It is not possible, my brothers and sisters, that the highest and most perfect obedience should ever deserve such a reward as the gift of the Son of God. Conceive of any virtue, and you will not dare to blaspheme so much as to think that it could deserve the death of Christ. No, the price is too great to be a recompense for any of our exertions. It is the spontaneous gift of heaven given to us, not on the footing of the law, but on the grounds of the sovereign grace of God, who gives as He wills to the unworthy sons of men. If you come to God with a price in your hands, you shall not have Christ; if you come to God thinking to force your way to heaven, or supposing that you could even contribute towards your entrance there, you shall find the gates of the law shutting you out forever; but if you come humbly penitent, confessing your soul-poverty, and plead with the Father that He would give to you His Son, you shall receive the gift of God into your soul most freely. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life." "We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Man is dead in sin, but Christ is a gift bringing life to the dead.

The text uses the definite article, "If you knew *the* gift of God," setting Christ as God's gift beyond all other gifts. True, the light of the sun is the gift of God to us. There is not a piece of bread we eat, nor a drop of water

we drink, but what it may be called the gift of God; but *the* gift which comprehends, excels, and sanctifies all other gifts, is the gift of Jesus Christ to the sons of men. I wish I had the power to speak as I should of this gift, but I am reminded by God's word that it is "unspeakable." "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." I can comprehend God's giving the earth to the children of men, giving to Adam and his seed dominion over all the works of His hands; I think I can understand God's giving heaven to His people, and permitting them to dwell at His right hand forever and ever; but that God should give the only begotten, "very God of very God," to take upon Himself our nature, and in that nature to actually be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"—this we cannot understand, and even the angels with their mightier intellects cannot grasp it fully. They look into it, but as they gaze they desire to see more, for even they feel they cannot search this out to perfection. An unfathomable depth of divine love is there in the condescending loving-kindness which gave Jesus Christ to die for us when we were yet sinners.

Beloved, it is *an unrivalled gift.* God has given to us such a treasure, that if heaven and earth were melted down, the price could not buy another like Jesus. All eternity cannot yield such a person as the Lord Jesus. Eternal God, You have no equal! And becoming Son of man, Your condescension has nothing that can rival it. Oh, what a gift! You cannot conceive of anything that you can put side by side with it. It is a gift, beloved, which comprehends all things within itself. "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?" Get Christ and you have the pardon of sin, the justification of your person; in the heart of that redemption you shall find sanctification, adoption, regeneration. Every covenant gift is wrapped up in Christ Jesus; "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me"; not one sprig of it, but a whole bundle! All things that can possibly be needed for the Christian for time and for eternity are given to him in the person of the Lord Jesus.

And *as this gift comprehends all, so it sweetens all.* Temporal mercies without Christ are like ciphers without a figure; but when you have these temporal mercies, and Christ stands in front of them, oh, what an amount they make! Temporal mercies without Christ are unripe fruit; but when Christ shines upon them, they grow mellow and sweet. Temporal mercies without Christ are the dry rivers—Christ fills them to the brim. They are like trees with leaves only, but Christ comes to give them fruit upon which we may live. Brothers and sisters, what are all the mercies of this life to us without Christ; would they not make our souls hunger? "Who have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You." The full wine vat or the barn that needs to be enlarged; what would these be without a Savior? O God, take them all away if You will, but give us more of Christ. Fill our hearts with the love of Christ, and You may empty the cupboard and purse if You will. Mercies are blessed when we have Christ with them, but if Christ is gone, they are but empty vanities.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is a gift most precious, my brothers and sisters, because *he who gets it is sure that he has the favor of God.* Other mercies do not necessarily bring with them God's favor. God often gives the most of this world to wicked men. He pours the husks out to the swine; as for His children, He often wrings out to them a full cup of bitterness. This world is not our portion, as we know right well. The wicked have their portion here, and they are full of fatness; their houses are full of provisions, and they leave the rest of their substance unto their children. But get Christ, and you have God's favor—you are sure of it. This is "The blessing of the Lord that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it." It is a right-hand and a left-hand blessing. Get Christ, and it is all blessing and no curse whatever. If you have Christ, as sure as you live, God loves you, for there never was a soul that had Christ's name written upon its forehead but what eternal love had inscribed it there, and in that writing had given a sure evidence and pledge of love that could not end!

If you have Christ, again, you must prize the gift, *because this is a token of your everlasting salvation.* Hell never enclosed within its gates a single soul that rested on the cross of Christ, and it never shall. If you have Christ, you have the melodies of heaven, you have the goodly land that "flows with milk and honey"; you shall never bear the wrath of God, Christ has borne it for you; you shall never hear it said, "Depart, you cursed," for Christ has said, "You are blessed forever and ever," yes, and you shall be blessed.

We shall now turn to the further thought which stands linked to the one I have thus tried to lay before you.

In the text knowledge is put with the gift: "If you knew the gift of God." Yonder woman in the wilderness is sorely vexed, her heart is ready to break; she has left the abode of her master, and journeyed far; she is faint herself, but a far greater trouble depresses her; her child, her only boy, lies under yonder shrubs to die for need of a drop of water. Do you see the anguish depicted on her face? Do you hear her bitter cries? Ah, woman, you may well wipe your eyes, your distress is causeless; you have room for thanksgiving, and not for sorrow; yonder is a spring of water, dip your pitcher and refresh your child. But, beloved, what was the use of the spring of water to her if she could not *see* it? Till her eyes were opened, Hagar could not see that God had provided for her—she must suffer and her child must die till she could perceive the supply. It is so with the gift of God. Beloved, until we know Christ, we famish for Him, but we find no relief. A sense *of* need is a very blessed work of divine grace, but it will *not* save you; you must get beyond knowing your need, you must perceive, accept, and enjoy the supply, or else assuredly you will perish, regardless of your knowledge of your need. Now, a knowledge of Christ is the gift of God. No man ever knew Christ experimentally and truly, except by the operation of the Holy Spirit upon his heart. It is in vain for those who are the advocates of free agency and human power to talk, for wherever you meet with a gracious spirit, you will be sure to find the confession that it was as much the work and gift of God to give us faith as to give us the object of faith—

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast,

That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin."

If God did nothing more for men than provide a Savior, and leave it for them to accept, if He never operated upon their souls and affections by His Holy Spirit, not one of Adam's race would ever enter into eternal life! If you would have knowledge of Christ, you must have it through the Holy Spirit, for this comes not by the works of the law, nor by the efforts of the flesh. That which is born of the flesh is still flesh; and only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and can make you acquainted with spiritual truth.

A saving knowledge of Christ is always personal. The man does not take it at second-hand, he does not get it from what his mother told him. She may be the instrument, the happy instrument, but the man learns for himself, or else he does not know savingly. Beware, beloved, of copying your religion out of other men's books. It must be written with the pen of the Holy Spirit upon the fleshy tablet of your own heart, or else you know nothing aright. Observe also, that as this knowledge is spiritual, so, as it is spoken of in the text, it immediately concerns Christ. All other knowledge, whatever it may be, will fail to save unless we know the gift of God, unless we are clearly acquainted with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. I say, with the person, for let me insist upon it, it is necessary for you and me to rest wholly upon the person, work, and righteousness of Jesus. You may know a great deal about His offices, you may have read much about what He did, but you must pass through all these, and get to Him—"Come unto ME," He says, "all you who labor and are heavy laden." At His feet your soul must cast itself down, kissing the Son lest He be angry. Before Him, the Great High Priest, you must present yourselves, desiring to be sprinkled with His precious blood, and to be saved in Him. Remember He is a man like yourselves. Though "God over all, blessed forever," yet is He man of the substance of His mother. Let your soul advance to Him in thought this morning, lay hold upon Him! If you cannot put your finger into the print of the nails, and your hand into His side, literally, with Thomas, yet do it spiritually. Remember, it is to know Christ and His cross, which is the saving knowledge; and everything short of this will leave you short of eternal life. Brothers and sisters, it must be spiritual knowledge. Any acquaintance with Christ that can be derived from pictures, or that may come to us through the use of outward symbols, will be all valueless. We must know Christ, not after the flesh, by the eyes and ears, we must comprehend Him by our inmost souls being acquainted with Him. Our heart must trust Him. Put away the crucifix! Let your *soul* wear the cross, not your body! Hang not up the picture of Christ on the wall, hang it upon the walls of your heart, *there* let His image be stored. Bear about you the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ in your life and character, and let your contemplations and thoughts be continually exercised about Him. This is the kind of knowledge of Christ—heart-knowledge, spiritual fellowship, the knowledge of the most vital part of the man, his soul, his newborn spirit. Now, such knowledge as this, when God has once given it to us, becomes

very operative upon the entire man; he has found the great secret, and he feels inclined to tell it; he has learned a great mystery, and it at once affects all the parts and passions of his nature, making a new man of him. This knowledge he never loses—he may forget much, but he never can forget Christ if he has once known Him. Like the dying saint who had forgotten his wife, forgotten his children, forgotten his *own name,* and yet smiled sweetly when they asked him if he remembered Christ Jesus. This is printed on the believer's heart: the warp and woof of his being bears this, like a golden thread, right through its center. Jesus, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, and let my right hand forget its cunning, but never shall my heart forget You who has given Yourself for me! This is the knowledge which we should desire, the knowledge spoken of in the text. Desire it, I beseech you, above gold, yes; seek it above much fine gold.

O you who have it not, open your mouths and pant after it! Hunger and thirst to know Christ, and take no rest, and get no satisfaction till you do know Him! If you ask me how this can be, I remind you that God alone can reveal Him to you, but yet you are to use the means. "Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life," and these are they which testify of Christ. Attend a Christ-honoring ministry! If you have been sitting under any minister who does not extol Christ, and lift Him up before you, however eloquent and intelligent he may be, leave his ministry, it is not fit for poor dying souls to listen to. You who need salvation can only find it in Christ. Seek, therefore, a ministry that is full of Christ. Christ the first, and Christ the middle, and Christ the last, and without end. Depend upon it, as men would think it folly to deal at a shop where the bread (so called) was not bread, where the food that was given was so adulterated as to yield no nutriment, so is it a sin on our part if we do not seek out the pure unadulterated milk of the word of God, and endeavor to grow thereby. Oh, how many souls are poisoned by listening to a ministry that is not full of Christ! But oh, if you do get a ministry that savors of the Lord Jesus, hear with both your ears, drink it in; be like the thirsty furrows that do not refuse a single drop of heaven's rain; receive with meekness the living word. Add to this an earnest prayer for illumination. Wait upon God each day, and say, "Show me Your Son; lo, I would know Christ: I would know Him so as to be saved by Him." And remember, "He who seeks finds; and to him who knocks it shall be opened," "Ask and it shall be given you." They who seek the Lord shall in due time be found of Him. "He who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

II. The first word of the text is "If." "If you knew the gift of God." "IF." AND WHAT THEN?

The "if" seems to me to wear a black side. It supposes that there are many who do not know "the gift of God." Alas, no supposition, but a fearful fact. Dear hearer, may I ask you to look to your own soul now? You are a church member; you have been considered to be a Christian from your youth till the present time; at least you have reckoned yourself to be so. But ask yourself if you now know the gift of God. Is Jesus Christ all

in all to you? Do you rest on Him as the unbuttressed pillar of your confidence? Do you love Him? Is He your Master? Are you conformed unto His image? Have you ever spoken to Him? Has He ever had communion with you—supping with you, and you with Him? As the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, if you know not Christ, your high profession is but a painted pageant to go to hell in! Your fancied experience is a will-o'-the-wisp leading you to destruction, and all your fond hopes shall come tumbling about your ears, like a house that is founded on sand, which totters in the day of storm. I pray you, then, dear hearers, as you would be right at the last, make heart-searching inquiries now, and let this be the question: Whether you know the gift of God in your soul or not?

But we will deal better with the bright side, knowing that there are many here who do not know the gift of God at all, it is a mercy to think that they may know it, for the "If you knew" implies that some who do not know it yet may know it before they die; and, thank God, some of you shall know it, and glorious results will follow at once. "If you knew the gift of God," my dear hearer, you who are not yet converted what a change would come over you! Let me single you out. You are here, this morning, quite uninterested in religion; you have come here this morning out of curiosity to look at the large assembly and hear the strange preacher, but religion has no interest in it for you. Life and death, and all the problems that connect themselves with time and eternity, are nothing to you. You are a butterfly, flying from flower to flower. You have no deeper sense of things than a man of the world, who thinks to live and die, and so to come to his end. Ah, but if you knew Christ, it would soon be different with you; that vain mind of yours would soon be full of thoughts; these worldly toys which are now so engrossing would then be put into their proper places. You would become thoughtful, and, let me tell you, you would become infinitely happier than you are now, for your present ease is a hollow thing. You are afraid to try it. You dare not sit down and think for an hour of your own state and future—you know you dare not. But, oh, "if you knew the gift of God," you could endure sober thought; yes, it would be your delight! And as for the future, you would dare to look into it; yes, it would be your greatest comfort to anticipate the glories which God has prepared for them who love Him. As I think on some of you indifferent ones, I could gladly weep over you, not merely because of the hell which will be your portion, but because of the heaven which you are losing even now. A heaven below is to know Christ, and you are missing this. Man of pleasure? Christ is pleasure! Men who would have ease and peace? Christ is the true ease, and if you knew Him, you would find true peace.

Possibly there may be some few in this assembly to whom religion is not even a matter of indifference, but worse—they have persecuted it; they are accustomed to vent their sharpest wit upon anything religious. To them, godliness is always known by the name of cant, and if a man is known to profess religion, he is at once the butt of every joke. Ah, but if you knew Christ, you would not do this. Saul of Tarsus sought much the

destruction of the people of God, but when once Christ had said to Him, "Why do you persecute Me?" and Saul understood that Christ was no other than God over all, the Redeemer of men, then he said, "Lord, what will You have me do?" Ah, persecutor! You would be just as warm for the cause as you are hot against it if you did but know Christ. Man, you would not have the heart to spit into the face of the crucified; you would never crucify Him afresh who died for His enemies; you would never be so cruel and barbarous as to trample on the members of Christ when you know that Christ, out of pure love, suffered for the sons of men. "If you knew the gift of God," persecutor, it would be otherwise with you than it is now.

Yes, and there are some here who would never persecute, but nevertheless they trifle with religion. Many more belong to this class than to the two I have just mentioned. I know many of you are impressed when we are delivering the truth of God earnestly, and you vow what you do not pay, and you promise reformations which are never made. Ah, you triflers, you who halt between two opinions, who, like Felix, would wait for a more convenient season, "if you knew the gift of God," this morning would be the convenient season. Oh, if God did but give you an understanding of the preciousness and sweetness of Christ, you would not delay! Who delays to be crowned when the time has come for him to receive a kingdom? What heir would ever postpone the day in which he should enter into the heritage? Does the bridegroom put off the hour of his marriage? Do men wish their happiness to be removed far away? Oh, no! And if you knew what Christ would be to your soul, and what joy and blessedness you would have in receiving Him, you would say, "Now is my time as it is God's time. O God, I give myself to You!" Trifler, may you yet know the gift of God!

Alas, there are some here who are not exactly triflers. They have serious thoughts, but they have some sin which they cannot give up. I cannot particularize cases, but there are such here. There are men here who would be Christ's, but the habit of taking intoxicating drink to excess clings hard to them. Have I not talked to some of you, who have with tears confessed the sin, and longed to be delivered from the snare, but you could not? Your besetting sins are too dear to you for you to give them up. With some it may be filthier vices, still. With others it is the thought, "Religion is too severe. To follow Christ is to give up so much; I must have a little more indulgence; I must for a little time at any rate drink of the wine of Satan's banquet." Ah, "if you knew the gift of God," you would give up the sweetest thing earth ever knew, to know the *greater* sweetness of Christ. What? Will you put my Lord and Master in comparison with the painted harlot of this wicked world? Will you put the solid gold of heaven's kingdom in contrast with the filthy draft and dross of this world's merchandise? O my Master, You are no more to be compared to the riches and enjoyments of life, than the sun is to be likened to a glowworm. Let Christ arise in your soul, and all your starry joys will be gone. You will find this one great joy fills your spirit to the brim and overflows, so that there is an exceeding and eternal weight of glory too

great for your spirit to be able to handle! If you knew the gift of God, sensualist, you would turn from your tables to feed on Him: you would leave your gilded couches of pomp and vanity, and everything else the world calls good or great; you would leave it all, turning from ashes to feed upon angels' food, even upon Christ the Lord, and the Redeemer of men!

There is another class here present, represented by some few, who would gladly be saved, but they fear they are too bad. They think that they could never be saved after delaying so long and sinning so foully. "If you knew the gift of God," you would never think that, for my Lord Jesus loves great sinners. "This man," it is said, "receives sinners, and eats with them." When the woman who had been a sinner washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, He did not utter an upbraiding word. The Lord is gentle, and full of compassion and tenderness and truth. He came not with a sword to slay, but He came to be slain Himself, that we might not die. You have only to come to Him, and let this encourage you. He has said it, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." He cannot cast you out; He must receive you; His word binds Him to it; He cannot deny Himself, and therefore He cannot refuse you.

If it were proper for us to prolong this addressing of separate characters, I think there would be in this suggestion, "If you knew the gift of God," something for everyone. I am sure if any of us who are now at enmity to God did but know what Christ is, if they could but know as with the knowledge I have before described, the person of the Lord Jesus, faith would immediately follow; we should trust our souls to God, and feel safe in the hands of God's appointed propitiation. Faith would be sure to be followed by prayer—we would cry to Him whom we now know, and prayer would be followed by His blessing. At the heels of that would come holy love to Him; and holy love would prompt us to serve. Service would be followed by increasing strength, and increasing strength would augment daily joy, till we should go up Jacob's ladder, gaining virtue after virtue by the power of the Son of God, till we were meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Each point in Christ's character, if known, would work good in us. For instance, "if you knew the gift of God," that He came to save the vilest of the vile, how could you doubt or despair because of your sins? If you knew that the salvation of Christ is finished by Himself, and not by us, how could you dream of adding to it, or think it necessary to bring your own feelings, and doings, to make the salvation complete which Christ has finished altogether apart from you? If you knew that Christ never forsook His people, would you be trembling and fearing lest in the hour of temptation He should fail you? If you knew how suitable Christ is to you, how ready He is to receive you, how full of love He is to all His people, how He feels in His heart all your pains and all your groans, how His honor is bound up in your salvation, how He has pledged Himself to bring every one of the saints to the Father's right hand—if you knew all this, Christian, you would live above your doubts, and fears, and feelings; you would live a heavenly life, like one who has seen Christ, and then has been made like He is.

Beloved, if we were to take a walk, this morning, through the streets of London, how many cases we would see where we might say sorrowfully of the persons we looked upon, "Alas for you! If you knew the gift of God, what a difference would come over you!"

Perhaps at this very hour you will find the great mass of the working men in London in their shirt sleeves. It has not struck them at all that going to a place of worship is desirable. They will be lounging about; the penny paper has been taken, and they have begun to read that; but as yet the gin house is not open—they feel as if there is nothing in the world to do but just lounge about and let the time run on. Ah, stepping into such a house you might say, "If you knew the gift of God, your Sabbaths would assume quite a different appearance. You would not talk about Pharisaic Sabbatarians, and the strictness of shutting up the house of drink, and only opening the house of worship, but you would feel the Sunday a delight, and the holy of the Lord honorable. Instead of wasting your time, it would seem to you as though Sabbaths were too short, and opportunities and means of divine grace too few. If you knew the gift of God, it would be otherwise with you, working man!"

Step into the next church or chapel, I do not care which, and observe the multitudes of the people going through the worship with mere formality, confessing what they never felt, and professing to believe what they know nothing of. Ah, we might look into the face of each worshipper and say, "If you knew the gift of God, you would give up this formalism, and worship God in spirit and in truth." We need not go far; there are many of you here in that state. May you know the gift of God, and forget formalities, and worship God in truth.

At some places you may step into the church or meeting house, and listen to the minister—an eloquent address, but altogether Christless—no care about the souls of men, no dealing with human consciences. Pompous sentences, sounding periods, high flights, climaxes, and I know not what oratorical flower, but nothing concerning the weighty matter of eternity, about the undying soul, and the precious cleansing blood. Ah, preacher, if you knew the gift of God, if you had in your soul any sense of the preciousness of the salvation of Christ, you would preach in another fashion!

Step in where the Ritualist has dressed himself in all his gaudy apparel, flaunting like a peacock before God Himself, and you may well say to him, "If you knew the gift of God" you would lay aside these fooleries and come before God sooner in sackcloth than in your tag-rags, humbling yourself before the Most High as a poor, guilty sinner, most accursed of all the human race for having dared to call yourself a priest; for priest you are not for your fellow men, for one is priest, even Christ Jesus, and no other is priest, save only that all saints have a common priesthood which some cannot usurp to themselves alone, unless they dare to bring upon themselves the vengeance of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who called themselves priests and were not. If you knew the gift of God, poor simpleton that you are, you would doff that priestly array, and bow before the Great High Priest of our profession, and worship Him alone!

While going down the street, yonder, I might knock at a door after leaving that ritualistic "mass house," and might find the merchant in his counting house. He looks a little disconcerted that I should call upon him on Sunday morning and find him with his pen behind his ear; but he says he has no time to cast up his accounts at any other period. Ah, but if you knew the gift of God, you would find other time, and find another occupation for this time, rather than spending upon yourself what God claims to be His own!

I pass on into the chamber of sickness, and I see on the bed of death a sinner full of fears and dread about the world which lies before him. Listen to his groans. He has no hope. He has lived without Christ. The world has been his portion, and now he has to leave it, and he is unprepared to meet his Judge. All is dark as the pit of hell where he is going. How miserable his state as he feels he is parting with all he has loved, and for which he has lived, and that there is nothing before him but a dread unknown existence in another world. Ah, if he only knew the gift of God, what a change there would be at once! What light, joy, and peace would come into that chamber! All its gloom would pass away, and in the place of it would come such rapture as would lead men to say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

I shall not detain you longer. We might go down one street and up another for many a day, and we would find thousands to whom we could say, "If you knew the gift of God, you would be another and different man from what you are."

III. And now, lastly—THE "IF" OF OUR TEXT, AND HOW DOES IT CONCERN BELIEVERS?

It seems to me to concern believers this way. Evidently there are tens of thousands who do not know the gift of God. Inquiry, then, of the most solemn kind should at once be made, "Has this ignorance of theirs been my fault? These men know not the gift of God—how can they know it unless there is someone to teach them? How shall they hear without a preacher? Is this ignorance to be laid at my door? beloved, in the name of Jesus Christ, I ask you seat-holders and members of this place who know Christ yourselves, is there a person sitting next to you in the pew who does not know Christ, and have you done your best to tell him about Christ? I pause, that conscience may give its reply. And you who do often speak about Christ in the school or in the street, preaching or not preaching, let me ask you, do you so talk about Christ that people can understand you? Believe me, I try to use very simple words, but I often hear of words I have uttered which have not been understood by people present. I am always grieved when such is the case. God knows I would speak the most vulgar words I could find if people could understand them better. To me the finery of language is less than nothing. I would sooner preach Christ's cross in the tongue of Billingsgate, if all would understand, than speak in the most polished tongue so that the poor could not comprehend me. My dear brothers and sisters, that a soul should go to hell lost through our fine sentences, who shall be accountable for this? The watchman is not to speak in Greek to those who only

know English, or even in good English to those who do not understand the language if it is well spoken. Augustine, I believe, frequently preached in exceedingly bad Latin, because it was the common talk of the people, and if he had spoken classic Latin he would not have been understood. And so must we do. If any man does not know Christ, have you told it to him in all the ways which you can find out of making it plain and clear? If you have not, then some responsibility lies with you. Then next, suppose you have not, will you, my brothers, for the future resolve in God's strength that if any man perishes for lack of knowledge, it shall not in the future be your fault? Make no rash vows, but do solemnly put it to your heart. But if you cannot speak as you would, yet you will distribute such publications, and give away such tracts as may tell the gospel simply. If you cannot do what you would, O resolve, dear brothers and sisters, to do what you can, that none here may be without the knowledge of Christ!

But though a professor, I shall venture to say to you, that the text seems to say to you: Do you know the gift of God yourself? When I asked you whether you told others about it, I think a question might have been raised—if you have not told others, it is very questionable whether you know it yourself. If you never weep for other men's sins, and never desire their salvation, you are not a saved soul. One of the first instincts of the saved soul is to say, "What can I do that others may be saved also?" Now, if you have done nothing, let a suspicion arise; and to us all, I think, there may be this query put: judging by my efforts, judging by my actions, judging by my inward feelings, may I not often ask myself, Do I know this gift of God? And may I not come, this morning, just as I did at the first, as a sinner, and look up to the wounds of Jesus, and cast myself again upon Him? If I never did believe before, Lord Jesus, by Your grace, I trust You now. Up till now if I have been a deceived one, here I am—

"My faith looks up to You,
You Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine:
Now hear me while I pray;
Take all my guilt away.
Oh let me from this day
Be wholly Thine."

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST!

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of
C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English,
and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit:
www.spurgeongems.org

SERMONS FROM SAINTLY DEATHBEDS
NO. 783

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 1, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people."
Genesis 49:33.

JACOB did not yield up the ghost until he had delivered the last sentence of admonition and benediction to his 12 sons. He was immortal till his work was done. So long as God had another sentence to speak by him, death could not paralyze his tongue. Yet, after all, the strong man was bowed down, and he who had journeyed with unwearied foot full many a mile, was now obliged to gather up his feet into the bed to die. His life had been eventful in the highest degree, but that dread event now came upon him which is common to us all. He had deceived his blind father in his youth, but no craftiness of Jacob could deceive the grave. He had fled from Esau, his angry brother, but a swifter and surer foot was now in pursuit from which there was no escape. He had slept with a stone for his pillow, and had seen heaven opened, but he was to find that it was only to be entered by the ordinary gate. He had wrestled with the angel at the brook Jabbok, and he had prevailed: but this time he was to wrestle with an angel against whom there was no prevalence. He had dwelt in Canaan in tents, in the midst of enemies, and the Lord had said, "Touch not My anointed, and do My prophets no harm," and therefore he had been secure in the midst of a thousand ills; but now he must fall by the hand of the last enemy, and feel the great avenger's sword. It was appointed to the patriarch to die as all men must do.

From the wording of the text, it appears very clearly that Israel did not dispute the irrevocable decree, nor did his soul murmur against it. He had long before learned that few and evil were his days, and now that they came to an end, he joyfully accepted their conclusion. He was not like a bull dragged to the slaughter, but he gathered up his feet by a voluntary act of submission, and then, bowing his head, he yielded up the ghost; like a man weary with a long day's toil, he was glad to rest, and therefore most cheerfully he attended to the great Father's summons, and was peacefully gathered unto his people and his God. As this is to be our lot by-and-by, we may contemplate in our meditations the departure of this mighty man, and ask that our death may be like his, that we, also, may finish our course with joy. May we—

"So live, that when our summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan that moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His place appointed by the just decree,
That you, sustained and soothed, approach your grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
Around him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

It is remarkable, my brothers and sisters, that the Holy Spirit has given us very few deathbed scenes in the book of God. We have very few in the Old Testament, fewer still in the New, and I take it that the reason may be, because the Holy Spirit would have us take more account of how we live than how we die, for life is the main business. He who learns to die daily while he lives, will find it no difficulty to breathe out his soul for the last time into the hands of his faithful Creator. If we fight the battle well, we may rest assured of the victory. If, enlisted under the banner of truth, resting in Jesus Christ, we finish our fight and keep the faith, we need not fear but that our entering into rest will be a blessed one. Perhaps the Holy Spirit would also show us that it is not so much to our profit to have our feelings harrowed by recitals of dying experiences. Certain preachers, in their sermons are very fond of extorting tears from their hearers by dragging before them the funerals of friends, painting the deathbed scenes of parents, unwrapping the winding sheets of little infants, and exhibiting the skeletons of buried relatives. This may be of some use: preachers may have used these scenes to work through the natural affections to something deeper; but this is not the way the Holy Spirit has selected. If the teachers of the gospel will study the Holy Spirit's model, they will learn that we are to strike at conscience rather than at the natural affections, and teach men holy principles rather than remind them of their sorrows.

From the great reticence of the Holy Spirit in this matter, I learn that He would not have us be abundant to superfluity in such things. Moreover, it may be suggested that the Holy Spirit has given us few of these deathbed scenes on paper because, being present with us, He presents them to us frequently in actual flesh and blood, visible to our eyes and audible to our ears. We are to look upon the presence of the Holy Spirit in the witness of dying men as, in some sense the continuance of the Holy Spirit's instructive authorship. He has finished yonder book written with paper and ink, but He is writing fresh stanzas to the glory of God in the deaths of departing saints, who one by one are taken from the evil to come singing the Lord's praises as they depart. If this is not so at any rate it is true that we have abundant testimonies to the faithfulness of God in the departure of those who, having lived by faith on earth, are now gone to see with their own eyes the King in His beauty, and the land which is very far off.

During the past week, as most of you know, God has seen fit to remove from the midst of His church a great man, and a prince in Israel, a man greatly beloved, one of the excellent of the earth, an amiable, zealous, talented, godly, and valiant man, esteemed personally wherever he was known, and honored officially wherever his ministry was enjoyed. Dr. James Hamilton was one of the most fragrant flowers in the Lord's garden of sweet flowers to which the beloved so often comes to gather lilies. He was not a Boanerges—not after the quality of Knox and Luther, but a Barnabas, a son of consolation, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. He had a singular elegance and refinement of style, in which metaphors the most novel and charming abounded, like golden grains in Africa's sunny fountains; in his utterances he gave forth a pleasant sound, as of one that plays well upon a goodly instrument: he was always musical with harmony of poetic illustration, but always musical with the

notes of Christ, always sweet with the perfume of the atoning blood. He was a cedar in our Lebanon—bur alas, the axe has laid low his glories: he was a gem of purest ray serene, but he shines no longer in the coronet of the church below. He was a nursing-father to full many of the Lord's little ones, and now we mourn because they lack his help: may they find in God's Spirit an abundant supply of all-sufficient grace. Well, he is gone from us—and while men are sad, there is joy beyond the skies; the loss of earth is the gain of heaven, and if the church has somewhat less below, she has more above. I think I see him at this moment borne upward to his final resting place as a stone squared and polished, to be built in the wall of the temple of the New Jerusalem; do you not hear the shouts of, "grace, grace unto it"? There is a fresh jewel this moment in the Redeemer's crown; heaven is lustrous with the beauty of another blood-washed robe; another voice is added to the everlasting song, another shout to the hallelujahs of those who feast at the eternal banquet! The church has lost nothing—she has only seen one of her valiant captains pass through the flood to join the triumphal band upon the other side; and as surely as the church is one, she loses none of her members—as certain as it is the same church triumphant and militant, so certain is it that Christ loses none of His people, and the church really none of her strength by death. The decease of our friend James Hamilton, in connection with another circumstance of a different character which has happened to me this week, led my meditations very much to saintly deathbeds, and I have therefore fastened upon this occasion to talk with God's people concerning their passage out of this world unto the Father. "'Tis greatly wise," says the poet, "to talk with our last hours." Sacred prudence bids us be familiar with the winding-sheet and the grave, which must soon be our most intimate acquaintances. Let us sojourn awhile upon the borders of the land unknown, to be sobered at least, if not sanctified.

First, *let us consider the departure of great saints, and of God's ministers in particular—what do these teach us?* Secondly, *the various modes of their departure—what do these teach us also?*

I. First, THE DEPARTURES OF GOD'S SAINTS, AND ESPECIALLY OF HIS MINISTERS—WHAT ARE THEIR LESSONS?

The first that lies upon the surface is this, *"Be you also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes."* When in the forest there is heard the crash of a falling oak, it is a sign that the woodsman is there, and every tree in the whole forest may tremble lest soon the sharp edge of the axe should find it out. We are all mortal, and the death of one should remind us that death lurks hard by us all. I trust we do not, by often hearing of death, become callous to it. May we never be like the birds in the steeple, which can build their nests when the bells are ringing, and sleep quietly when the merry marriage or solemn funeral peals are startling the air. May we regard death as the most solemn of all events, and be sobered by its approach. In the old wars of the Danish kings, there is a legend that when Harold was contending with his brother Harequin, an arrow was seen flying in the air, quivering as if it scarcely knew its way, and was searching for its victim; then all of a sudden it pierced the leader's forehead. A little imagination may picture us as being in the same position as the Danish lord: the arrow of death is flying for a

while above us, but its descent is sure and its wound is fatal. It ill behooves us to laugh and sport while life hangs on a thread. The sword is out of its scabbard; let us not trifle; it is furbished, and the edge sparkles with fearful sharpness; let us prepare ourselves to meet it. He who does not prepare for death is more than an ordinary fool, he is a madman. When the voice of God is calling to us through the departures of others, if we do not listen to the warning, we may expect Him to follow the rejected word of counsel with a blow of wrath; for He often strikes down right terribly those who would not listen to His reproving messages. Be ready, minister, see to it that your church is in good order, for the grave shall soon be dug for you; be ready, parent, see that your children are brought up in the fear of God, for they must soon be orphans; be ready, men of business, you who are busy in the world, see that your affairs are correct, see that you serve God with all your heart, for the days of your terrestrial service will soon be ended, and you will be called to give account for the deeds done in the body, whether they are good or whether they are evil. O may we all prepare for the tribunal of the great King with a care which shall be rewarded with the commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Secondly, *the deaths of righteous men should teach us their value.* According to the old saying, we never know the value of things till we lose them. I am sure it is so with holy men. Let me urge young people here to prize their aged godly parents, to treat them kindly, to make their last days happy, because they cannot expect to have them long on earth to receive their tokens of affectionate gratitude. Those who have Christian parents, little know how great is the privilege they enjoy until they become parents themselves, and learn the cares and sorrows of the mother's office and the father's state. Are any of you favored with friends who have given you instruction in the faith, whose goodly words and holy examples have helped you on the way to heaven? Thank God much for such good company; be much with them, treasure up the pearls which drop from their lips. They must soon be gone, value them today as you will do when they are departed. Are you privileged with an earnest, faithful, ministry? Do you hear the gospel lovingly and honestly proclaimed? Then bless God every day of your life for that faithful ministry. All ministry is not such—all people are not in such a case. Be grateful, then, and show your gratitude by giving earnest heed to the things that are spoken, lest by any means you should let them slip, and so should miss the great salvation through lack of earnestness. I do beseech you, dear friends, value the Christian ministry. I ask no honor for men, but I do ask honor for the office which Paul said he would magnify; and wherever you see that God has sent an ambassador, and that His ambassador is praying for you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, turn not away from his entreaties, close not your ears to his persuasions, but honor the man's office, pay homage to the King who sent him, by yielding up your heart in obedience to the Word which is delivered to you.

Furthermore, I think the departures of great saints and those who have been eminent, teach *us to pray earnestly to God to send us more of such*—a lesson which, I am quite certain, needs to be inculcated often. There is sadly little prayer in the church for the rising ministry. You pray for those who are your pastors, and rightly so. "Brethren, pray for us,"

you cannot do us a better favor. But there is so little prayer that God would raise up ministers! Know you not that as surely as the blood of Christ bought the redemption of His people, as surely as the resurrection of Christ was for the justification of the saints, so surely the ascension of Christ was for the distribution of ministry among the sons of men? Know you not the passage, "He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men …. and He gave [these were the gifts] some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers"? Now, you plead the precious blood when you would obtain pardon; you plead the resurrection, and you receive justification; but how seldom do you plead the ascension, so as to obtain a faithful ministry? Parts of Christendom are becoming terribly deficient in ministry. I have been told, and I have read in the literature of America, that in many parts of the United States, one-third of the churches are devoid of pastors, believers are struggling and striving after ministers, but cannot find them. There must have been in that case a failure in the prayer, "Lord, send forth laborers into the harvest." And I should not at all wonder if such a case should happen to England, for I see a dreadful lethargy in the hearts of many of God's people as to the work of praying for preachers, and assisting in training them. In olden times, if any men showed the slightest ability in speech, the saints sought such out, and tried to instruct them, as Aquila and Priscilla, when they found Apollos a man eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures, they took him and instructed him further; and Paul, when he saw that Timothy was an apt scholar, instructed him further in the faith; while our blessed Lord not only preached the gospel, but founded a college in which He had 12 students (and more than that), who constantly went about with Him, learning from His example and ministry how themselves to become teachers of others. But now, indeed, there are wiseacres who talk about "man-made ministers," and despise all attempts to assist our youth to become qualified in the testimony of the truth of God. May the Lord teach them reason, and give them common sense, but let no Christian give one single particle of heeding to their prattling. Let it be our earnest endeavor, both by prayer and every other means, to seek to obtain from God a succession of earnest, faithful, qualified ministers, for, say what you will, it is upon the ministry that God shall send you that which much of the success of the church must depend. Those sects which pretend to do without a special ministry (and it is usually a transparent pretense), may prosper for a little while; their setting up every disciple to be a teacher suits the natural pride of the human heart, and Christian men, being grossly deceived, yield to it for a little while, but I know that not one single one of these communities can endure throughout a generation in vigorous existence. With a spasm of excitement, and a flush of zeal, they grow awhile, fattening upon those whom they can decoy from other churches, and then they dwindle away to nothing, or divide into little knots, each one agreed in hating the other most fervently. What is everybody's business is nobody's business, and since there is no man set to see after souls, no man does see after them; and the whole flock becomes scattered for lack of a shepherd, who, in God's hand, might have kept them together. Faithful servants of the living God, as you prize the church and its ordinances, strive with God that as He takes one by one

of His servants away, He would send us others, that the church may never lack her standard-bearers, and the flock of God never be destitute of pastors after God's own heart. Pray seven times each day that God may keep alive the name and glory of Christ in the land by faithful teachers of His truth!

Yet there is a valuable truth on the other side. We desire always to look at both sides of a question. *The taking away of eminent saints from among us should teach us to depend more upon God, and less upon human instrumentality.* I was reading, yesterday, the dying prayer of Oliver Cromwell, and one sentence in that man of God's last breaths pleased me exceedingly. It was to this effect, I think, I have copied out the words, "Teach those who look too much on Your instruments to depend more upon Yourself." Brave old Oliver was a man upon whom the whole nation rested; he could say with David, "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it." In a time of terrible anarchy, when men had become fierce with fanatical prophesies, and wild with political passions, Oliver Cromwell's iron hand restored peace, and kept a tumultuous land in order; and now, when he would be worst missed, and could very ill be spared, he must depart, and this is his prayer—"Teach them to depend less upon Your instrument, and more upon Yourself." You may have observed that frequently when a man is in the zenith of his power, and people have said, "That is the man who of all others we could least afford to lose," that very man has been taken away, that special light has been quenched, that particular pillar has been removed. The Lord would have all the glory given unto His own name. He has said it, said it often in a voice of thunder, but men will not hear it—"All power belongs unto God." He will honor and bless an instrumentality, for that is His mode of working, but He will not divide the crown with the most honored agency, He will have all the glory spring back unto Himself; and by frequently breaking up His battle axes and weapons of war, He teaches His church that He can fight with His own bare arm, and win the victory to Himself without any instrument of warfare.

Coming back, however, to the old thought, do you not think that the departure of eminent saints should *teach each one of us to work with more earnestness and perseverance while we are spared?* One soldier less in the battle, my brother?—then you must fill up the vacancy; you who stand next in the ranks must close up, shoulder to shoulder, that there be no gap. Here is one servant less in the house: the other servants must do more work. It is but natural for us to argue so, because we wish the Master's work to be done, and it will not be done without hands. If *we* do not preach the gospel, angels will not preach it. If *we* do not win souls for God, we must not expect cherubim and seraphim to engage in this divine employment. Somebody must do it, and, since we would have all done that can be done, you and I must do the more when helpers are removed. There is one hand less: we must stretch out our hands more often to execute the sacred work. Behold, a reaper falls in the corner of the field, and all the harvest must be gathered in before the season is past! brothers, sharpen your sickles, gather up your strength, toil more hours in the day, throw more strength into your toil; above all, pray for a greater blessing upon what is done. If there is less bread, then we must have a larger benediction to multiply it, to make it sufficient for the tens of

thousands. If there are fewer laborers, we must ask the Master to give those laborers more strength, that the work may still be done, and nothing be marred for lack of effort.

I wish I had the strength, this morning, mental and physical combined, to urge this upon you as I have strived to urge it upon myself. I have sought before the Lord that He would teach me to live an active, earnest, laborious, heavenly life. Very few of us understand what *life* is. Baxter at Kidderminster, from morning to night spending and being spent for the Master's service: Whitefield, all over England and America, toiling and laboring without the thought of rest, instant in season and out of season: these are the men we should emulate. But, alas, we do a little, and then we fold our hands with ridiculous self-satisfaction. Now and then we awaken ourselves to something like zeal, and then we fall back into a state of carelessness. It ought not to be, but with diligence and perseverance we ought to live as having death in view, and the near approach of the time when the night comes where no man can work.

I must leave those lessons with you: I cannot enforce them; only the Holy Spirit can.

II. Come with me to the second part of my discourse. Much may be learned from the MODES OF DEPARTURE of God's servants.

All believers fall asleep in Jesus and in Him they are all saved; the precious blood has washed them, the hands of Christ keep them, the earnest of the Spirit is with them, and the everlasting gates are opened to receive them; but unto them all there is not ministered the same abundant entrance into the kingdom, neither do all their faces shine with those gleams of glory which rest upon the highly favored. To some of God's own children the dying bed is *a Bochim,* a place of weeping. It is melancholy when such is the case, and yet it is often so with those who have been negligent servants: they are saved, but so as by fire: they struggle into the port of peace, but their entrance is like that of a weather-beaten vessel which has barely escaped the storm, and enters into harbor leaking so terribly as to be ready to founder, without her cargo, for she has thrown that overboard to escape the waves, her sails are torn to ribbons, her masts gone by the board, barely able to keep afloat. Thousands enter into glory as Paul and his companions in peril landed at Malta, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship; all come safe to land, but it is as it were by the skin of their teeth. In the dying beds of some believers that text is sadly illustrated, "If the righteous scarcely are saved."

We have known them lying on the brink of eternity, bemoaning themselves after this fashion—"God has forgiven me, but how can I forgive myself? I am saved; but, oh, that I had made a profession of religion more plainly and boldly! Would God that I had not been so slow in serving my Master! I have prayed so little, given so little, done so little, I am a most unprofitable servant. Woe is me, for I have been busy here and there, and have forgotten my life's work; I have made money, but have won no jewels for Christ; I have taken care of my family, but alas, I have done next to nothing for the cause of Christ. I shall have no means of serving the cause of God when I enter heaven; I cannot then succor the poor, feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, or send the gospel to the ignorant. I might have done much when I was in health and strength, but

now I can do little or nothing, for I am weak, and languishing upon this bed; would to God that my Sabbaths had profited me more, and that I had walked more in nearness to God." Such dolorous heart-breaking confessions have we heard, varied occasionally by the lament, "Would to God I had brought up my children better, for now I am obliged to say with David, 'My house is not so with God,' though I know that He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Many a dying pillow has been wet with the penitential tears of saints, who have then fully seen their formerly unobserved shortcomings and failures and laxities in the family, in the business, in the church, and in the world.

Brothers and sisters, it is beautiful to see the repentance of a dying saint: travel far as you may, you will not readily behold a more comely spectacle. I have seen it, and have breathed the prayer, "Lord, give me a humble and contrite spirit, like that which I see before me, and help me now to feel the same brokenness of heart." Yet at the sight of such instances it has struck me that the fruit though precious was scarcely seasonable: it must be acceptable to God, for He never rejects repentance anywhere, but yet a brighter state of soul would have glorified Him more in dying moments. We regret to see mourning of soul as the most conspicuous feature in a departing brother or sister we desire to see joy and confidence clearly manifested at the last. We are glad to see contrition anywhere, because it is evermore a lovely work of the Spirit, but we would have preferred to see it sooner, when regrets would not have been unavailing, when the repentance would have brought forth practical fruit in a change of life. I say thank God if there is a deep repentance on the dying bed, but this is not the highest or best thing: to enter into life halt or maimed is not the grandest or most comely mode of departing out of this life into another. To die in the dark with Jesus is safe, but to have the light of God at the last is better. We remember reading of a popular minister, (and the reading of it has struck through our heart), who, when he was dying, said to those about him, "I die in great bitterness of mind, for I have been one of the most admired trees in God's vineyard, and yet when I look back upon my past life, I fear I have brought forth many blossoms and many leaves, but very little fruit unto God's glory." Ah, it will go hard with us ministers if we have to sorrow thus in our last hours! You Sunday school teachers, and other beloved laborers for Christ, I trust you will not have to cry at the last, "Our harvest is past, and our summer is ended, and none of our children are saved; oh that we had talked to our boys and girls more solemnly; oh that we had entreated them with tears to flee from the wrath to come!" I pray God that such may not be your dying lamentations, but that each one of us may live for God at the rate which eternity will justify.

When Zeuxis, the old painter, was taking much pains with his painting, pausing over every tint and touch, they asked him why he worked so carefully. He answered. "I paint for eternity." So let us take good heed in all that we do for God, not offering to Him that which costs us nothing, nor going out to His service at random, without prayer for His blessing and fitness for His work: let us take earnest heed to ourselves that we live for *eternity*—for so shall we wish to have lived when we come to die.

It has not infrequently occurred that the dying scene has been to the Lord's departing champions a *battle,* not perhaps by reason of any slips or shortcomings—far from it, for in some cases the conflict appeared to arise by very reason of their valor in the Lord's service. Who among us would assert that Martin Luther failed to live up to the light and knowledge which he had received? So far as he knew the truth of God, I believe he most diligently followed it; beyond most men he was true to conscience, he knew comparatively little of the truth of God, but what he did know he maintained with all his heart, and soul, and strength; and yet it is exceedingly painful to read the record of Luther's last few days. Darkness was round about him, thick clouds and tempest enveloped his soul. At the last the sky cleared, but it is very evident that among all the grim battles in which that mighty German fought and conquered, probably the most tremendous conflict of his life was at its close. Can we not guess the reason? Was it not because the devil knew him to be his worst enemy then upon the earth, and therefore, hating him with the utmost power of infernal hate, and feeling that this was his last opportunity for assaulting him, he gathered up all his diabolical powers, and came in against him like a flood, thinking that maybe he might at the last overcome the stout heart, and cow the valiant spirit? Only by divine assistance did Luther win the victory, but win it he did!

Is this form of departure to be altogether deprecated? I think not. It is to be dreaded in some aspects, though not in others, for is it not a noble thing for the knight of the cross to die in harness? A blessed thing for the Christian soldier is to proceed at once from the battlefield to his eternal rest. The like was the case with John Knox, the Scottish Luther, whose bold spirit feared the face of no man; he was beset with a temptation which seemed a strange one to trouble *him*, namely, a temptation to self-righteousness. He had always denounced all trust in works, and yet that error assaulted him at the last, and he had a long and bitter conflict, though it ended in joyful victory. It has been quaintly said that, "Sometimes God puts His children to bed in the dark." When our heavenly Father sends the rider upon the pale horse to fetch us home from the school of this life's tribulation, he comes riding down the street making such a clangor with his horse hoofs that we are alarmed, until we come to know that he is sent by our Father, and then we are glad. God permits the Jordan to overflow its banks when some of His best children are passing through, for He designs to magnify His grace in the last trial of their faith, and thus to show to men and angels, and devils, who are looking on, how He can triumph in His servants when flesh and heart are failing.

Beloved, I think these instances are rare compared with others which I am now to mention. To many saints their departure has been a peaceful entrance into the *fair haven* of repose. The very weakest of God's servants have frequently been happiest in their departing moments. John Bunyan, who had observed this fact, in the description of Mr. Feeble-Mind's passage of the river, "Here also I took notice of what was very remarkable; the water of that river was lower at this time than ever I saw it in all my life. So he went over at last wet not much above his ankles." Heaven's mercy tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and gives to babes no battle, because they have no strength for it; the lambs calmly rest on the bosom

of Jesus, and breathe out their lives in the Shepherd's arms. What encouragement this ought to be to you who are the tender ones among us! What cheering tidings for you who are weak in faith! Like Mr. Ready-to-Halt, you shall cry, "Now, I shall have no more need of these crutches, since yonder are chariots and horses for me to ride on." There died a few weeks ago one who may be known to some of you by name, Mr. James Upton, late pastor of the church in Cotton Street, more than 25 years laid aside from the ministry by a most terrible depression of spirit, which caused him one long unbroken night of sorrow. He could not engage in any form of devotional exercise, so frightfully was he depressed in spirit, doubtless by some form of mental derangement; but during the last few hours of his life, when he was speechless, and could therefore give no verbal testimony, the gloom which had always been manifested in his countenance was removed, and he was evidently at the last enjoying profound peace of mind. If God does not take away melancholy from the believer till the last, He will at the last. If He allows His people to live for years in winter, their summer shall begin at the last hour. When the death damp is heaviest, then shall the light burn the brightest, and, as the body decays and weakens, the soul shall arise in her strength!

Many of the saints have gone farther than this, for their deathbeds have been *pulpits*. Not to all of them was it so given, for Mr. Whitefield desired to bear a dying testimony for Christ, but did not do so, somebody remarking to him, "You have borne so many living testimonies to so many thousands, that your Master needs no dying testimony from you." If you have read Brainerd's Journal, what wonderful things he speaks of there when all his last thoughts were delightfully fixed upon eternity and the world to come! Thus he wrote in his diary, "Oh, how sweet were the thoughts of death to me at this time! Oh, how I longed to be with Christ, to be employed in the glorious work of angels, and with an angel's freedom, vigor, and delight." At another time he wrote, "'Tis sweet to me to think of eternity; but oh, what shall I say to the eternity of the wicked? I cannot mention it or think of it. The thought is too dreadful!" His thoughts, however, were all taken up with the joyful eternity belonging to believers, into which he entered with holy triumph. Then there was that dear man of God, Mr. Payson. His last expressions were weighty sermons. He says, "I suppose, speaking within bounds, I have suffered 20 times as much as any martyr that was ever burnt at the stake, through the painfulness of my disease, and yet, frequently, day after day, my joy in God has so abounded as to render my sufferings not only tolerable but welcome." When Mr. Matthew Henry was dying, Mr. Illidge came to him, and he said, "You have been used to take notice of the sayings of dying men: this is mine, 'A life spent in the service of God and in communion with Him, is the most pleasant life that anyone can live in the world.'" Well spoken! Our pulpits often lack force and power; men suppose that we speak but out of form and custom, but they do not suspect dying men of hypocrisy, nor think that they are driving a trade and following a profession. Hence the witness of dying saints has often become powerful to those who have stood around their couch: careless hearts have been impressed, slumbering consciences have been awakened, and children of God quickened to greater diligence by what they have heard. Brothers and sisters, do you ever find dying beds to be *thrones of judgment?* Have

you ever seen the hoary saint stayed upon the pillows, prophesying like a seer concerning the things of this world and of the world to come? Have you ever heard him deliver sentences as weighty as the verdict of a judge? "What?" he says, "what are all these earthly things to me now, now that I am about to leave them? They are all bubbles and emptinesses." Solomon in his life could not moralize with such force as holy men do in their deaths; and then, as they point the finger to eternity, and tell of worlds to come, and of the need of being prepared for the tremendous day of the great assize, they appear as if, clothed in their white raiment, they were performing a rehearsal of the last dread judgment. Many who care not for the voice of the ministry, nor even for the witness of God's written Word, have felt the power of the speeches of men and women standing on the borders of eternity.

And, brothers and sisters, to bring this to a close, lest I should weary you, we have known not infrequent cases (no, commonly this is the case), when the dying bed has become *a Pisgah,* from the top of which the saint has viewed his inheritance, while his couch has glowed all of a sudden into the chariot of Amminadab, a flaming chariot such as that in which Elijah was borne away to dwell with God. Saints have frequently been in such triumphant conditions of mind, that rapture and ecstasy are the only fit words in which to describe their state. "If this is dying," said one, "it is worthwhile living for the mere sake of dying." Dr. Payson, in his dying hours, wrote to his sister, "Were I to adopt the figurative language of Bunyan, I should date this letter from the land of Beulah, of which I have been for some weeks a happy inhabitant. The Celestial City is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its odors are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant stream that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has gradually been drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as He approached; and now He fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float as an insect in the beams of the sun; exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering, with unutterable wonder, that God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm. A single heart and a single tongue seem altogether inadequate to my needs—I need a whole heart for every separate emotion, and a whole tongue to express that emotion." It has been sometimes said these excitements are produced by delirium or caused by drugs, yet there are multitudes of clear cases in which men have had no delirium, and have been altogether untouched by drugs, as in the case of Halyburton, who said, "I know that a great deal from a dying man will go for canting and raving; but I bless God, He has kept the judgment I had, that I have been able to reflect with composure on His dealings with me. *I am sober and composed, if ever I was so.* * * * You may believe a man venturing on eternity. I have weighed eternity this last night—I have looked on death as stripped of all things pleasant to nature; * * and under the view of all these, I have found that in the way of God they gave satisfaction, a *rational* satisfaction, that makes me rejoice." Halyburton, indeed, broke forth into such ecstatic expressions, that I fear to quote them, lest I should spoil them; among his words were these, "If ever I was

distinct in my judgment, and memory in my life, it is since He laid His hands upon me. My bones are sticking through my skin, and yet all my bones are praising Him. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? * * I am now a witness for Christ, and for the reality of religion. * * I have peace in the midst of pain; and oh, how much of that I have had for a time past! My peace has been like a river—not a discomposed thought. * * Strange that this body is going away to corruption, and yet my intellectuals are so lively, that I cannot say there is the least alteration, the least decay of judgment or memory; such vigorous acts of my spirit towards God and things that are not seen." When drawing near his end, one remarked to him, "Blessed are they who die in the Lord." He replied, "When I fall so low that I cannot speak, I'll show you a sign of triumph if I am able." And when he could no longer speak, he lifted up his hands, clapped them as in token of victory, and in a little while departed to the land where the weary are at rest. Oh, it is grand to die like this, to get heaven here below in foretastes; to partake of dainty dishes brought from off the tables of immortals, to stay our souls while lingering here! This shall be your portion, and this shall be my portion, if we are faithful unto death, continuing diligent in service.

I have already told you, if we believe in Christ, we shall die safely, but we may not necessarily die in this triumph—this blessing is given to those who are faithful, earnest, and diligent; a special reward which God reserves to some men who, like Daniel, are greatly beloved, or who, like John, are indulged with special visions of the New Jerusalem before entering upon the scene!

Brothers and sisters, as I close my sermon I can but utter the present yearning of my ardent spirit—

"Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she passed."

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE ROSE AND THE LILY
NO. 784

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 8, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."
Song of Solomon 2:1.

HERE are sweet flowers blooming serenely in this wintry weather. In the garden of the soul you may gather fragrant flowers at all seasons of the year; and although the soul's garden, like every other, has its winter, yet, strange to say, no sooner do the roses and the lilies mentioned in the text begin to bloom, than the winter flies and the summer smiles. Outside, in your garden, the summer brings the roses; but within the enclosure of the heart, the roses and lilies create the summer. I trust that we this morning may have divine grace to walk abroad in the fields of heavenly contemplation, to admire the matchless charms of Him whose cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers, whose lips are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh. May our hearts interpret the language of our text, and sing—

"Is He a rose? Not Sharon yields
Such fragrance in all her fields:
Or, if the lily He assumes,
The valleys bless the rich perfume."

It is our Lord who speaks: "I am the rose of Sharon." How is it that He utters His own commendation, for it is an old and true adage that "self-praise is no recommendation"? None but vain creatures ever praise themselves, and yet Jesus often praises Himself. He says, "I am the good Shepherd;" "I am the Bread of Life;" "I am meek and lowly of heart," and in many speeches He is frequently declaring His own excellences, yet Jesus is not vain! Scorned be the thought! Yet I said if any *creature* praised itself it must be vain, and that, too, is true. How then shall we solve the riddle? Is not this the answer that He is no creature at all, and therefore comes not beneath the rule? For the creature to praise itself is vanity, but for the Creator to praise Himself, for the Lord God to manifest and show forth His own glory is becoming and proper. Hear how He extols His own wisdom and power in the end of the book of Job, and see if it is not most seemly, as the Lord Himself proclaims it! Is not God constantly ruling both providence and grace for the manifestation of His own glory, and do we not all freely consent that no motive short of this would be worthy of the divine mind? So, then, because Christ talks thus of Himself, since no man dare call Him vainglorious, I gather an indirect proof of His deity, and bow down before Him, and I bless Him that He gives me this incidental evidence of His being no creature, but the uncreated one Himself. An old Scotch woman once said, "He is never as bonnie as when He is commending Himself," and we all feel it so—no words appear more

suitable out of His own lips than these, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."

Our Lord when He thus praises Himself, doubtless does so for an excellent reason, namely, that no one can possibly reveal Him to the sons of men but Himself. No lips can tell the love of Christ to the heart till Jesus Himself shall speak within. Descriptions all fall flat and tame unless the Holy Spirit fills them with life and power; till our Immanuel reveals Himself within the recesses of the heart, the soul sees Him not. If you would see the sun, would you light your candles? Would you gather together the common means of illumination, and seek in that way to behold the orb of day? No, the wise man knows that the sun must reveal itself, and only by its own blaze can that mighty lamp be seen. It is so with Christ. Unless He so manifest Himself to us, as He does not unto the world, we cannot behold Him. He must say to us, "I am the rose of Sharon," or else all the declarations of man that He is the rose of Sharon will fall short of the mark. "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona," said He to Peter, "for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto you." Purify flesh and blood by any educational process you may select, elevate mental faculties to the highest degree of intellectual power, yet none of these can reveal Christ. The Spirit of God must come with power, and overshadow the man with His wings, and then in that mystic Holy of Holies the Lord Jesus must display Himself to the sanctified eye, as He does not unto the blind sons of men. Christ must be His own mirror; as the diamond alone can cut the diamond, so He alone can display Himself.

Is it not clear enough to us all that Jesus, being God, befittingly praises Himself? And we being frail creatures, He must necessarily commend Himself, or we would never be able to perceive His beauty at all! Each reason is sufficient, both are overwhelming; it is most suitable that Jesus should preach Jesus, that love should teach us love. Beloved, happy are those men to whom our Lord familiarly unveils His beauties. He is the rose, but it is not given unto all men to perceive His fragrance. He is the fairest of lilies, but few are the eyes which have gazed upon His matchless purity. He stands before the world without form or comeliness, a root out of a dry ground, rejected by the vain, and despised by the proud. The great mass of this bleary-eyed world can see nothing of the ineffable glories of Immanuel. Only where the Spirit has touched the eyes with eye salve, quickened the heart with divine Life, and educated the soul to a heavenly taste, only there is that love-word of my text heard and understood, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." "To you who believe He is precious;" to you He is the cornerstone; to you He is the rock of your salvation, your all in all; but to others He is "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient."

Let it be our prayer before we advance a single foot further, that our Redeemer would now reveal Himself to His own chosen people, and favor each one of us with at least a glimpse of His all-conquering charms. May the King Himself draw near unto His guests this morning, and as of old, when it was winter He walked in the temple in Solomon's porch, so may He walk in the midst of this waiting assembly.

I. First, this morning, I shall speak with you a little, as I may be helped by the Holy Spirit, upon THE MOTIVES OF OUR LORD IN THUS COMMENDING HIMSELF.

I take it that He has designs of love in this speech. He would have all His people rich in high and happy thoughts concerning His blessed person. Jesus is not content that His brethren should think meanly of Him; it is His pleasure that His espoused ones should be delighted with His beauty, and that He should be the King and Lord of their spirits: He would have us possess an adoring admiration for Him, joined with most cheerful and happy thoughts towards Him. We are not to count Him as a bare necessity, like bread and water, but we are to regard Him as a luxurious delicacy, as a rare and ravishing delight, comparable to the rose and the lily. Our Lord, you observe, expresses Himself here poetically, "I am the rose of Sharon." Dr. Watts, when he had written his delightful hymns, was the subject of Dr. Johnson's criticism, and that excellent writer, who wrote with great authority upon all literary matters, entirely missed his mark when he said that the themes of religion were so few and so prosaic that they were not adapted for the poet—they were not such as could allow of the flight of wing which poetry required. Alas, Dr. Johnson! How little could you have entered into the spirit of these things, for if there is any place where poetry may indulge itself to the uttermost, it is in the realm of the infinite! Jordan's streams are as pure as Helicon, and Siloa's brook as inspiring as the Castilian fount. Heathen Parnassus has not half the elevation of the Christian's Tabor, let critics judge as they may. This book of Solomon's Song is poetry of the very highest kind to the spiritual mind, and throughout Scripture the sublime and beautiful are as much at home as the eagles in their nests of rock. Surely our Lord adopts that form of speech in this Song in order to show us that the highest degree of poetical faculty is consecrated to Him, and that lofty thoughts and soaring conceptions concerning Himself are no intruders, but are bound to pay homage at His cross. Jesus would have us enjoy the highest thoughts of Him that the most sublime prose can possibly convey to us; and His motives I shall labor to lay before you.

Doubtless, He commends Himself because *high thoughts of Christ will enable us to act consistently with our relations towards Him.* The saved soul is espoused to Christ. Now, in the marriage estate, it is a great assistance to happiness if the wife has high ideas of her husband. In the marriage union between the soul and Christ, this is exceedingly necessary. Listen to the words of the Psalm, "He is your Lord; and worship you Him." Jesus is our husband, and is no more to be named Baal, that is, your master, but to be called Ishi, your man, your husband; yet at the same time He is our Lord, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the savior of the body." When the wife despises her husband, and looks down upon him, the order of nature is broken, and the household is out of joint; and if our soul should ever come to despise Christ, then it can no longer stand in its true relation to Him; but the more loftily we see Christ enthroned, and the more lowly we are when bowing before the foot of the throne, the more truly shall we be prepared to act our part in the economy of grace towards our Lord Jesus. Brothers and sisters, your Lord Christ desires

you to think well of Him, that you may submit cheerfully to His authority, and so be a better spouse to this best of husbands.

Moreover, our Master knows that *high thoughts of Him increase our love.* Men will not readily love that which they do not highly esteem. Love and esteem go together. There is a love of pity, but that would be far out of place in reference to our exalted Head. If we are to love Him at all, it must be with the love of admiration; and the higher that admiration shall rise the more vehemently will our love flame forth. My brothers and sisters in Christ, I beseech you think much of your Master's excellences. Study Him in His primeval glory, before He took upon Himself your nature! Think of the mighty love which drew Him from His starry throne to die upon the cross of shame! Consider well the omnipotent affection which made Him stretch His hands to the nails, and yield His heart to the spear! Admire Him as you see Him conquering in His weakness over all the powers of hell, and by His suffering overthrowing all the hosts of your sins, so that they cannot rise against you any more forever! See Him now risen, no more to die; crowned, no more to be dishonored; glorified, no more to suffer! Bow before Him, hail Him in the halls of your inner nature as the Wonderful, the Counselor, the mighty God within your spirits, for only thus will your love to Him be what it should.

A high esteem of Christ, moreover, as He well knows, *is very necessary to our comfort.* Beloved, when you esteem Christ very highly, the things of this world become of little value with you, and their loss is not so heavily felt. If you feel your losses and crosses to be such ponderous weights that the wings of Christ's love cannot lift you up from the dust, surely you have made too much of the world and too little of Him. I see a pair of balances. I see in this one the death of a child, or the loss of a beloved relative; but I perceive in the other scale the great love of Christ; now we shall see which will weigh the more with the man—if Jesus throws the light affliction up aloft, it is well, but if the trouble outweighs Jesus, then it is ill with us indeed. If you are so depressed by your trials that you can by no means rejoice, even though you know your name is written in heaven, then I think you do not love Jesus as you should. Get but delightful thoughts of Him, and you will feel like a man who has lost a pebble but has preserved his diamond; like the man who has seen a few rotten rags consumed in the flames, but has saved his children from the conflagration. You will rejoice in your deepest distress because Christ is yours if you have a high sense of the preciousness of your Master. Talk not of plasters that will draw out all pain from a wound! Speak not of medicines which will cure diseases! The sweet love of Christ once put on the deepest wound which the soul can ever know, would heal it at once. A drop of the precious medicine of Jesus' love tasted in the soul would chase away all heart pains forever. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, be within us, and we make no choice of situations: put us in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, if You will walk the glowing coals as our companion, we will fear no evil.

Further, *our Lord would have us entertain great thoughts of Himself, because this will quicken all the powers of our soul.* I spoke to you just now of love receiving force from an esteem of Jesus, I might say the same of faith, or patience, or humility. Wherever Christ is highly esteemed, all

the faculties of the spiritual man exercise themselves with energy. I will judge your piety by this barometer—does Christ stand high or low with you? If you have thought little of Christ, if you have been content to live without His presence, if you have cared little for His honor, if you have been neglectful of His laws, then I know that your soul is sick—God grant that it may not be sick unto death! But if the first thought of your spirit has been, "How can I honor Jesus?" If the daily desire of your soul has been, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" I tell you that you may have a thousand infirmities, and may even scarcely know whether you are a child of God at all, and yet I am persuaded, beyond a doubt, that you are safe since Jesus is great in your esteem. I care not for your rags, what do you think of *His* royal apparel? I care not for your wounds, though they bleed in torrents, what do you think of *His* wounds? Are they like glittering rubies in your esteem? I think nothing the less of you, though you lie like Lazarus on the dunghill, and the dogs lick you; I judge you not by your poverty; what do you think of the King in His beauty? Has He a glorious high throne in your heart? Would you set Him higher if you could? Would you be willing to die if you could but add another trumpet to the strain which proclaims His praise? Ah, then, it is well with you! Whatever you may think of yourself, if Christ is great to you, you shall be with Him before long.

High thoughts of Jesus will set us upon high attempts for His honor. What will men not do when they are possessed with the passion of love? When once some master thought gets hold of the mind, others who have never felt the power of it, think the man to be insane; they laugh at him and ridicule him. When the grand thought of love to God has gained full possession of the soul, men have been able to actually accomplish what other men have not even thought of doing. Love has laughed at impossibilities, and proved that she is not to be quenched by many waters, nor drowned by floods. Impassable woods have been made a footway for the Christian missionary; through the dense jungle, steaming with malaria, men have passed bearing the message of the truth of God; into the midst of hostile and savage tribes, even weak and trembling women have forced their way to tell of Jesus; no sea has been so stormy, no mountains have been so elevated that they could shut out the earnest spirit; no long nights of winter in Labrador or in Iceland have been able to freeze up the love of Christ in the Moravian's heart—it has not been possible for the zeal of the heir of heaven to be overcome, though all the elements have combined with the cruelty of wicked men, and with the malice of hell itself. Christ's people have been more than conquerors through Him who has loved them, when His love has been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and they have had elevated thoughts of their Lord.

I wish it were in my power to put this matter more forcibly, but I am persuaded, brothers and sisters, that our Lord in commending Himself to us, this morning, in the words of our text, does so with this as His motive, that by the power of His Spirit we may be led to esteem Him very highly in the inmost secret of our heart. And shall He speak to us in vain? Shall He stand in this pulpit, this morning, as He does in spirit, and shall He say, "I am the rose of Sharon"? And shall we reply, "But we see not Your beauty"? Shall He add a double commendation, "I am the

lily of the valley"? And shall our cold hearts reply, "But we admire not Your spotless purity"? I trust we are not so utterly abandoned to spiritual blindness and ingratitude. Far rather, although we confess before Him that we do not admire Him as we should, we will add humbly, and with the tear of repentance in our eyes—

"Yes we love You and adore—
O for grace to love You more."

II. Whatever may be the commendable motive for any statement, yet it must not be made if it is not accurate, and therefore, in the second place, I come to observe OUR LORD'S JUSTIFICATION FOR THIS COMMENDATION, which is abundantly satisfactory to all who know Him.

What our Lord says of Himself is strictly true. It falls short of the mark, it is no exaggeration. Observe each one of the words. He begins, *"I am."* Those two little words I would not insist upon, but it is no straining of language to say that even here we have a great deep. What creature can, with exact truthfulness, say, "I am"? As for man, whose breath is in his nostrils, he may rather say "I am not," than "I am." We are so short a time here and so quickly gone, that the ephemera, which is born and dies under the light of one day's sun, is our brother. Poor short-lived creatures, we change with every moon, and are inconsistent as the wave, frail as the dust, feeble as a worm, and fickle as the wind. Jesus says, "I am," and, blessed be His name, He can fairly claim the attributes of self-existence and immutability. He said, "I Am," in the days of His flesh, He says, "I Am," at this hour: whatever He was He is, whatever He has been to any of His saints at any time, He is to us this day. Come, my soul, rejoice in your Unchangeable Christ, and if you get no further than the first two words of the text, you have a meal to stay your hunger, like Elijah's cakes, in the strength of which he went for 40 days. "I Am" has revealed Himself unto you in a more glorious manner than He did unto Moses at the burning bush, the great "I AM" in human flesh has become your Savior and your Lord!

"I am *the rose."* We understand from this, that Christ is lovely. He selects one of the most charming of flowers to set forth Himself. All the beauties of all the creatures are to be found in Christ in greater perfection than in the creatures themselves—

"White and ruddy is my Beloved,
All His heavenly beauties shine;
Nature can't produce an object,
Nor so glorious, so divine;
He has wholly
Won my soul to realms above."

"Whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report," all are to be found stored up in our Well-Beloved. Whatever there may be of beauty in the material world, Jesus Christ possesses all that in the spiritual world, only in a ten-fold multiplication. He is infinitely more beautiful in the garden of the soul and in the paradise of God, than the rose can be in the gardens of earth, though it is the universally acknowledged queen of flowers.

But the spouse adds, "I am the *rose of Sharon."* This was the best and rarest of roses. Jesus is not "the rose" alone, but "the rose of Sharon,"

just as He calls His righteousness "gold," and then adds, "the gold of Ophir"—the best of the best. Jesus, then, is not only positively lovely, but superlatively the loveliest—

"None among the sons of men,
None among the heavenly train,
Can with Sharon's rose compare.
None so sweet and none so fair."

The Son of David takes the first place as the fairest among ten thousand. He is the sun, and all others are the stars; in His presence all the feebler lights are hidden, for they are nothing, and He is all in all. Blush for your deformities, you beauties of earth, when His perfection's eclipse you! Away, you pageants, and you pompous triumphs of men, the King in His beauty transcends you all! Black are the heavens, and dark is the day in comparison with Him! Oh, to see Him face to face! This would be a vision for which life would be a glad exchange. For a vision of His face we could gladly be blind forever to all joys beside.

Our Lord adds, "I am the lily," thus giving Himself a double commendation. Indeed, Jesus Christ deserves not to be praised doubly, but sevenfold, yes, and unto seven times seven. Heap up all the metaphors that express loveliness; bring together all the adjectives which describe delight, and all human speech and all earth-born things shall fail to tell of Him. The rose with all its redness is not complete till the lily adds its purity, and the two together are but dim reflections of our glorious Lord! I learn from the text that in Christ Jesus you have a combination of contrasted excellences. If He is red with the flush of courageous zeal, or red with triumph as He returns from Edom, He is the rose; but He is a warrior without sinful anger or cruel vengeance, He is as pure and spotless as the timid virgin who toys with the dove—He is therefore our snow-white lily. I see Him red as the rose in His sacrifice, as—

"From His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down";

but I see Him white as the lily as He ascends on high in His perfect righteousness, clothed in His white robe of victory, to receive gifts for men. Our Beloved is a mingling of all perfections to make up one perfection, and of all manner of sweetness to compose one complete sweetness. Earth's choicest charms commingled feebly picture His abounding preciousness.

He is the "lily *of the valleys."* Does He intend by that to hint to us that He is a lily in His lowest estate, a lily of the valley? The carpenter's Son, living in poverty, wearing the common garb of the poor, is He the lily of the valleys? Yes, He is a lily to you and to me, poor dwellers in the lowlands. Up yonder He is a lily on the hilltops where all celestial eyes admire Him; down here, in these valleys of fears and cares, He is a lily still as fair as in heaven. Our eyes can see His beauty, can see His beauty now, a lily to us this very day. Though we have not seen the King in His beauty, yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like Jesus Christ in our eyes, as we see Him by faith in a glass darkly.

The words, having been opened up one by one, teach us that *Christ is lovely to all our spiritual senses.* The rose is delightful to the eyes, but it is also refreshing to the nostrils and the lily the same. So is Jesus. All the senses of the soul are ravished and satisfied with Him, whether it is

the taste or feeling, the hearing, the sight, or the spiritual smell, all charms are in Jesus. Often when we have not seen the Anointed, we have perceived His presence. Traveling on the Lake Lugano, one morning, we heard the swell of the song of the nightingale, and the oars were stilled on the blue lake as we listened to the silver sounds. We could not see a single bird, nor do I know that we wished to—we were so content with the sweetness of the music: even so it is with our Lord; we may enter a house where He is loved, and we may hear nothing concerning Christ, and yet we may perceive clearly enough that He is there, a holy influence streams through the actions of the household; so that if Jesus is unseen, it is clear that He is not unknown. Go anywhere where Jesus is, and though you do not actually hear His name, yet the sweet influence which flows from His love will be plainly enough discernible.

Our Lord is so lovely, that *even the recollection of His love is sweet.* Take the rose of Sharon, and pull it leaf from leaf, and lay the leaves in the jar of memory, and you shall find each leaf most fragrant long afterwards, filling the house with perfume; and this very day we remember times of refreshing enjoyed at the Lord's table still delightful as we reflect upon them.

Jesus is lovely in the bud as well as when full blown. You admire the rose quite as much when it is but a bud as when it bursts forth into perfect development: and I think, Christ to you, my beloved, in the first blush of your piety, was not one whit less sweet than He is now. Jesus full blown, in our riper experience, has lost none of His excellence. When we shall see Him fully blown in the garden of paradise, shall we not count it to be our highest heaven to gaze upon Him forever?

Christ is so lovely that He needs no beautifying. When I hear men trying to speak of Him with polished sentences, which have been revised, and re-revised upon their manuscripts, I would ask them why they need to paint the rose of Sharon, and what they think they are doing in seeking to enamel the Lily of the valleys? Hold up Christ crucified, and He Himself is beautiful enough without our paint and tinsel. Let the roughest tongue speak sincerely of Him in the most broken but honest accents, and Jesus Himself is such a radiant jewel that the setting will be of small consequence, He is so glorious that He is "Most adorned when unadorned the most." May we always feel thus concerning Him, and if we are tempted to display our powers of oratory when we have to speak of Him, let us say, "Down, busy pride, and let Christ rule, and let Christ be seen." He needs no help from you.

He is so lovely, again, that He satisfies the highest taste of the most educated spirit to the fullest. The greatest amateur in perfumes is quite satisfied with the rose, and I should think that no man of taste will ever be able to criticize the lily, and laugh at its form. Now, when the soul has arrived at her highest pitch of true taste, she shall still be content with Christ, no, she shall be the better able to appreciate Him. In the world's history, we are supposed to have arrived at an age of taste, when color and form are much regarded. I must confess I think it a gaudy, tasteless age, and the fashion of the day is vulgar, childish, and depraved. Bright and glittering colors, and antique, grotesque, forms are much sought after; and men must introduce their chosen fineries and fopperies into

their worship, supposing that it is comely to worship God with silks, and laces, and ribbons, and gilt, and tinsel, and I know not what of trumpery besides! Just as the harlot of Babylon arrayed herself in pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, even so do her imitators adorn themselves. As for us, my brothers and sisters, the beauty of Christ is such that if we go into a barn to worship, we are quite as satisfied as though it were a cathedral with grand arches and glowing windows; such is the beauty of Christ in our eyes, that we are quite content to hear of Him without the pealing organ and the swell of Gregorian chants; and we are even satisfied though there should be no display of taste, nothing sensuous and scenic, nothing to please the eye or charm the ear. Jesus alone affords our mind all that delightful architecture, poetry, and music could profess to give, and when our soul gets near to Him, she looks upon all outward adornments as mere child's toys, fit to amuse the rattle-brains of this poor idiot world—vain trinkets to men in Christ Jesus, who by reason of use have had their senses exercised, and learned to delight in nobler things than those in which the swine of this earth delight themselves. God give you to know that if you need beauty, Jesus is Sharon's rose; if you need spotless charms to delight your true taste, He is the lily of the valleys.

Dwelling for another minute on this subject, let me remark that our Lord Jesus Christ deserves all He has said of Himself. First, *in His divine glory;* the glory of Christ as God; who shall write about it? The first-born sons of light desire to gaze into this vision, but feel that their eyes are unable to endure the excess of the light of God. He is God over all, blessed forever. Concerning Christ, I may say that the heavens are not pure in His sight, and He charged His angels with folly. Nothing is great, nothing is excellent but God, and Christ is God. O roses and lilies, where are you now? Our Lord deserves these praises, again, *in His perfection of manhood.* He is like ourselves, but in Him was no sin. "The prince of this world comes, but has nothing in Me." Throughout the whole of His biography, there is not a fault. Let us write as carefully as we will after the copy, we still blot and blur the pages, but in Him there is no mistake. His life is so wonderfully perfect that even those who have denied His deity have been astounded at it, and have bowed down before the majesty of His holiness. You roses of ardent love, and you lilies of purest holiness, where are you now when we compare you with this perfect man? He deserves this commendation, too, *in His mediatorial qualifications.* Since His blood has washed us from all our sins, we talk no more of the red roses, for what can they do to purify the soul? Since His righteousness has made us accepted in the Beloved, we will speak no more of spotless lilies, for what are these? He deserves all this praise, too, *in His reigning glory.* He has a glory which His Father has given Him as a reward in the power of which He sits down at the right hand of God forever and ever, and shall soon come to judge the world in righteousness, and the people with equity. Beloved, when I think of the pompous appearance when He shall descend a second time in splendor upon the earth, I say again, you roses, your radiant beauties are utterly eclipsed, and you lilies, your snow-white purity is forgotten, I can scarcely discern you; O fair flowers of earth, you are lost in the blaze of the great white throne, and in the

flames of fire that shall go before the Judge of all to prepare His way! View the Lord Jesus in any way you please—all that He Himself can say concerning Himself He richly deserves, and therefore glory be unto His name forever and ever, and let the whole earth say, Amen.

III. I shall now conduct you to a third consideration, namely, THE INFLUENCE OF THIS COMMENDATION UPON US.

Christ desires our loftiest thoughts of Himself, and His desires are for our good. O my Beloved, I wish time would stay its wing a moment or two, that I might urge upon you, with all your hearts, to second the endeavors of Christ, to labor after holy elevated thoughts concerning Himself, since He desires them for you. And if you ask me how you are to attain them, let me aid you a minute. *Think of the ruin of this world* till Christ came into it! I think I see in vision a howling wilderness, a great and terrible desert, like the Sahara. I perceive nothing in it to relieve the eyes, all around I am wearied with a vision of hot and arid sand strewn with tens of thousands of bleaching skeletons of wretched men who have expired in anguish, having lost their way in the pitiless waste. O God, what a sight! How horrible! A sea of sand without a boundary, and without an oasis, a cheerless graveyard for a race forlorn! But what is that I see? All of a sudden, springing up from the scorching sand, I see a root, a branch, a plant of renown; and as it grows it buds, the bud expands—it is a rose, and at its side a lily bows its modest head; and miracle of miracles, as the fragrance of those flowers is diffused in the desert air, I perceive that wilderness is transformed into a fruitful field, and all around it blossoms exceedingly, the glory of Lebanon is given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon! Call it not Sahara, call it Paradise! Speak not of it any longer as the valley of death, for where I saw the skeletons bleaching in the sun, I see a resurrection, and up spring the dead, a mighty army, full of life immortal—you can understand the vision. Christ is the rose which has changed the scene. If you would have great thoughts of Christ think of *your own ruin.* Yonder I behold you cast out an infant, unwashed, defiled with your own blood, too foul to be looked upon except by beasts of prey. And what is this that has been cast into your bosom, and which lying there has suddenly made you fair and lovely? A rose has been thrown into your bosom by a divine hand, and for its sake you have been pitied and cared for by divine providence, you are washed and cleaned from your defilement, you are adopted into heaven's family, the fair seal of love is upon your forehead, and the ring of faithfulness is on your hand—you are a prince unto God—though just now you were a castaway orphan. O prize the rose, the putting of which into your bosom has made you what you are!

Consider your daily need of this rose. You live in the pestilential air of this earth—take Christ away, you die. Christ is the daily food of your spirit. You know, believer, that you are utterly powerless without your Lord. O prize Him then in proportion to the necessities you receive from Him! As you cannot even pray or think an acceptable thought apart from His presence, I beseech you press Him to your bosom as the beloved of your soul. You are like a branch cut off and withered, thrown outside the garden gate to be burnt as are the noxious weeds, apart from Him; but when you are near Him you bring forth fruit unto the glory of God. Praise

Christ, I say, then, after the rate of the needs that you have received from Him.

Think, beloved, of *the estimation of Christ beyond the skies,* in the land where things are measured by the right standard, where men are no longer deceived by the delusions of earth. Think how God esteems the only-begotten, His unspeakable gift to us. Consider what the angels think of Him, as they count it their highest honor to veil their faces at His feet. Consider what the blood-washed think of Him, as day without night they sing His well-deserved praises with glad voices. Remember how you yourself have sometimes esteemed Him. There have been happy hours when you would freely have given your eyes, and felt you cared no longer for the light of earth's brightest days, for your soul's eyes would serve you well enough if you could forever be favored with the same clear sight of Christ. Have there not been moments when the chariots of Amminadib seemed but poor dragging things, compared with the wheels of your soul when Jesus ravished your heart with His celestial embrace? Estimate Him today as you did then, for He is the same, though *you* are not.

Think of Him today as you will think of Him in the hour of death, and in the Day of Judgment, when none but Jesus can help to keep your soul alive. The great King has made a banquet, and He has proclaimed to the entire world that none shall enter but those who bring with them the fairest flower that blooms. The spirits of men advance to the gate by the thousands, and they bring each one the flower which they think the best; but in droves they are driven from His presence, and enter not into the banquet. Some bear in their hand the deadly nightshade of superstition, or carry the flaunting poppies of Rome, but these are not dear to the King, the bearers are shut out of the pearly gates. My soul, have you gathered the rose of Sharon? Do you wear the lily of the valley in your bosom constantly? If so, when you come up to the gates of heaven you will know its value, for you have only to show this, and the porter will open the gate—not for a moment will he deny the admission, for to that rose the porter opens forever. You shall find your way with this rose in your hand up to the throne of God Himself, for heaven itself possesses nothing which excels the rose of Sharon, and of all the flowers that bloom in paradise there is none that can rival the lily of the valleys. Get Calvary's blood-red rose into your hand by faith, and wear it; by communion preserve it; by daily watchfulness make it your all in all, and you shall be blessed beyond all bliss, happy beyond a dream! So be it yours forever.

IV. Lastly, I shall close by asking you to make CONFESSIONS SUGGESTED BY MY TEXT.

I will not make them for you, and therefore need not detain you from your homes. I will utter my own lamentation and leave you every one apart to do the same. I stand before this text of mine to blush, this morning, and to weep while I acknowledge my ungrateful behavior. "My Lord, I am truly ashamed to think that I have not gazed more upon You. I know, and in my heart believe, that You are the sum total of all beauty, yet must I sorrowfully lament that my eyes have been gadding abroad to look after other beauties; my thoughts have been deluded with imaginary ex-

cellencies in the creatures, and I have meditated but little upon Yourself. Alas, my Lord, I confess still further that I have not possessed and enjoyed You as I ought! When I might have been with You all day and all night, I have been roving here and there, and forgetting my resting place. I have not been careful to welcome my Beloved and to retain His company. I have stirred Him up by my sins, and have driven Him away by my lukewarmness. I have given Him cold lodgings, and slender hospitality within the chambers of my heart. I have not held Him fast, neither have I pressed Him to abide with me as I ought to have done. All this I must confess, and mourn that I am not more ashamed while confessing it. Moreover, my good Lord, although I know Your great sacrifice for me might well have chained my heart forever to your altar (and O that You had done so!) I must acknowledge that I have not been a living sacrifice as I should have been. I have not been so fascinated by the luster of Your beauty as I should have been. O that all my heart's rooms had been occupied by You, and by You alone! Would God my soul were as the coals in the furnace, all ablaze, and not a single particle of me left unconsumed by the delightful flames of Your love! I must also confess, my Lord, that I have not spoken of You as I should have done. Albeit I have had many opportunities, yet I have not praised You at the rate which You deserve. I have given You at best but a poor, stammering, chilly tongue, when I should have spoken with the fiery zeal of a seraph."

These are my confessions; brothers and sisters, what are yours? If you have none to make, if you can justly claim to have done all that you could have done for your Beloved, I envy you; but I think there is not a man or woman here who will dare to say this. I am sure you have all had falls, and slips, and shortcomings, with regard to Him. Well, then, come humbly to Jesus at once. He will forgive you readily, for He does not soon take offense at His spouse. He may sometimes speak sharp words to her, because He loves her, but His heart is always true, and faithful, and tender. He will forgive the past, He will receive you at this moment, yes, this moment He will display Himself to you. If you will but open the door to Him, He will enter into immediate fellowship with you, for He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me." O Christ, our Lord, our heart is open, come in, and go out no more forever. "Whoever believes on the Son has everlasting life." Sinner, believe and live!

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

WANTED, A GUEST CHAMBER!
NO. 785

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 15, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The Master says, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?" Mark 14:14.

AS FAR as we know, out of the many thousands who had come to Jerusalem from the utmost ends of the earth to keep the Passover, none were left unaccommodated with a guest chamber except our Lord Jesus Christ. Jerusalem, at the time of the Passover, was one great inn; the whole of the houses were occupied not only by the regular tenants, but by their friends from the country parts of Judea. Each one had invited his own friends, and all the houses were filled; but there was found no one to invite the Savior, and He had no dwelling of His own. He who received sinners, was excluded by all. The friend of man was houseless, and at the national festival He was no man's guest. He would have been left in the streets, if by His own supernatural power He had not found Himself an upper room in which to keep the feast. It is so even to this day; Jesus is not received among the sons of men save only where by His supernatural power and grace He makes the heart anew. Every pursuit has its eager followers, every art its votaries, every object its devotees, but Jesus is uncared for and neglected. Art, science, poetry, literature, mechanics, politics, wealth—all these obtain a willing homage; men need no renewal of their minds to follow after these; but to the natural man the Lord Jesus has no form nor comeliness, and He therefore is despised and rejected. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Like the Levite in the days of the Judges, "There was no man that took him into his house to lodging." All doors are open enough to the prince of darkness, but Jesus must clear a way for Himself or lodge in the streets. I think I hear Him crying even to His own church, "Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled: for My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night."

Doubtless one reason for this may be found in the fact that it was dangerous to receive Christ at that season. The rulers were hunting Him, thirsty for His blood, and they had issued the command that if any man knew where He was, he should tell them, that they might take Him. In the first place, to harbor Christ was to run the risk of being put out of the synagogue; in the second, to become the object of public contempt, and perhaps in conclusion, to meet with a sudden and violent death; therefore, prudent, careful men, closed their doors against Him, and argued that they could not expose their families to so much peril. They might in their hearts admire Him, in their souls they might lament that He was so harshly dealt with, but they could not run the risk of declaring themselves to be on His side by entertaining Him at that moment of ex-

citement. So is it at this hour, men always have a good reason, as they think, for that most unreasonable of all unkindnesses—the rejection of Jesus, their best friend. The farm, the merchandise, the newly-married wife, all these are the transparently weak excuses for not coming to the gospel supper. Preoccupation of mind with some other pursuit; the self-denials which Christianity would involve; the difficulties which are supposed to beset a consistent Christian profession—any, and all of these, and even worse than these, serve to satisfy the human conscience with the shadow of an excuse. Jesus Christ is kept on the cold side of the door, and our worst enemies are welcomed. Though it is the highest honor that man can have to entertain Him, yet a cruel refusal is given Him, and any excuse in the world is thought to be sufficient.

Yet there was one who was willing to entertain the Savior, and the Lord knew Him and where to find Him, according to that ancient saying, "The Lord knows them who are His." There shall never be a time in the world's history so dark but surely the Lord will have His chosen stars shining brightly amid the gloom. Christ shall never be so much despised but what there will be found here and there elect souls, hearts that the Lord has touched, who will say, "Come in and welcome, most sweet Lord: we rejoice to render You the hospitality of our loving hearts." Be of good courage, my brothers and sisters; piety may be at a low ebb, but it shall never run dry: the lamp may flicker, but it cannot be extinguished; our ranks may be thinned, but the host shall hold the battlefield. There are a few names even in Sardis; there is one Lot at least, even in Sodom; and in the raging Sanhedrin a Nicodemus holds a seat. In the worst times of superstition God raises up witnesses for His truth. We need never fear for the church—an imperishable seed is in her, and nothing shall destroy her. The gates of hell shall not prevail against her; though her ministers may fall, and many of her professed members may apostatize, yet the Lord will keep up the succession of the saints, and Jesus shall not lack a man to bear up the standard of the cross; so long as the earth remains, the everlasting kingdom of the Son of David shall stand.

I shall now call your attention to the whole incident of our Lord's finding a guest chamber in which to keep the Passover, and I shall regard the question which I have selected for a text, first, as *the mighty word of the Master's effectual grace;* and next, as *the affectionate inquiry of the servant's obedient solicitude.*

I. First, the Master says, "Where is the guest chamber?" This question may be regarded as THE MIGHTY WORD OF THE MASTER'S EFFECTUAL GRACE.

Our Lord intended to celebrate the Passover in the large upper room belonging to the person to whom He sent Peter and John; the message which He sent by their lips was all-powerful, the man at once yielded up his furnished parlor without difficulty or demur, because there went a power with the word which the man was unwilling and unable to resist. Viewing this as a symbolical representation of the way in which hearts are won for Jesus, we observe, in the first place, *that the time and the circumstances were all appointed.* Two apostles were commanded to go to the city, and when they should come to the city, providence would be there working before them—they were to meet a man just at the entrance

of the city; he was to be there at the very moment of their arrival; he and none but he. This man must bear a pitcher—the pitcher must be filled with water; the water carrier must proceed to a certain house, and to no other. This house must contain an upper room, large enough to receive Christ and 12 others; this room must be in the possession of a person who would be perfectly willing to receive the Master and His disciples, and the good man of the house must be home to show the room, and give the messengers admittance at once. Here were several very unlikely things to meet together at one particular juncture, and yet they did so meet. Providence arranges that when the apostles are at the city gates, the tankard-bearer is there too, with his pitcher full of water; he goes to the house, the house is the right habitation, the man who possesses it shall be the right man, and Christ shall be entertained. beloved, there are quite as many notable circumstances to be observed in the conversion of each one of God's people. I do not doubt that the Lord has settled, concerning every one of His elect, the exact time when they shall pass from death unto life, the precise instrumentality by which they shall be converted, the exact word that shall strike with power upon their mind, the period of conviction which they shall undergo, and the instant when they shall burst into the joyful liberty of a simple faith in Christ. It is all settled, all arranged and predetermined in the divine purpose. If the very hairs of our head are all numbered, much more the circumstances of the most important of all events which can occur to us!

This may not seem to be a very practical truth of God, and yet I think it is. I may go, for instance, a journey by rail; it is left to my option at what time to start, and in what carriage I shall ride; yet I select a particular hour and carriage, and soon a person is thrown in my way whom I have never seen before; the conversation is directed towards holy things; that person is already anxious, and my conversation is so consoling that it seems to him that I am sent for the very purpose of relieving his anxiety. As we converse upon divine things he is led to see what he never saw before, the way of salvation by the substitutionary sacrifice is opened up to him, and he casts himself into the hands of the Savior. Now, who shall say but what there was an arrangement there which God Himself, in His infinite wisdom, saw fit to make for the designed end? You have two ways today of going home from the tabernacle; you know not why, but you select one of the two, and in that street, if you are on the alert, as you should be, and anxious to deliver souls from going down to the pit of hell, you may meet with an individual whom you would not have seen if you had taken the other route, and it may be that you, by a few words concerning eternal salvation, shall direct that person into the way of peace, and lead him to lay hold on eternal life. He who observes providence shall never need a providence to observe, and he who watches providence with the view of discovering occasions for usefulness, will find himself surrounded with golden opportunities for soul-winning. I would have you, therefore, respect the workings of divine providence, by being upon your watchtower to avail yourselves of them. You know nothing of the secret decree of God, but you can see what the decree brings forth, and then if you are wise, you can benefit your neighbors by it. Believe firmly that God has a purpose to serve by everything that occurs, and that He would

have you, His servants, watchful for all opportunities that you may bring men to knowledge of the truth of God. I hope, this morning, that there are some here who scarcely know why they are in the Tabernacle, but the secret is that eternal purposes of divine grace towards them are now ripe for fulfillment. Remarkable circumstances may have worked together to bring them here; possibly had it been finer weather, the crowd would have filled the place earlier, and they would have been excluded for lack of room—this wet weather gave them a chance of admission where the gospel is preached, and so the very drops of rain may have been God's messengers of mercy to them, indirectly working for their salvation. There may be circumstances which I cannot pretend to guess, which revolve round some of you concerning which God has said, "Thus and thus it shall be, that I may bring this man to the spot where I intend to arrest him by divine grace, and make him a saved soul." I do trust this may be the case, and that miracles of mercy may be worked by our Redeemer according to the counsel of His will.

Note further a second thing, albeit the circumstances were all foreordained, yet *Christ's entrance into this man's house was worked by instrumentality.* Had our Lord pleased to do so, He could have remained where He was, He could have secretly sent forth His Spirit into the householder's mind to compel him to lend his upper room. Certainly there was no need why Peter and John should go as pioneers, for, if the Lord had gone Himself in person, at once He would of course have obtained quite as ready admission as His servants. But He chose to work by means. So it is in conversion; the Lord could save souls if He willed, without ministers, without teachers, without prayerful parents, without even the written word, but He does not choose to do so. There are a few instances in which men have been suddenly impressed where no cause for the impression was apparent beyond the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit. Apart from instrumentality, men have been awakened in the midst of their sins, like Saul of Tarsus, who was struck down while on the road to persecute the saints in Damascus; the most obstinate have been suddenly subdued; but the general rule is, that "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," and men do not hear without a preacher, but God sends the preacher and the hearing ear, and then gives the willing heart by His effectual grace. So, beloved, we must never fall into the delusion that the purposes of God set aside the use of means. I have heard thoughtless or critical talkers say, "If God works out His purposes, then there is no need for preaching or any other means." Ah, simpleton that you are, if we teach you that God works out His purposes by *means*, how crazy must you be to charge us with thinking lightly of the means! If God accomplishes His eternal purposes by preaching, then the more need for preaching, and the more encouragement in it, for what would be the use of preaching if God had not purposed to bless it? What were the use of plowing and sowing, if God had not predestinated a harvest by such means? We do not believe in a decree which ordains effects without causes: the ordinance of God is comprehensive, and takes in all things; instrumentality is as much in the decree as is the result of such instrumentality. God, who determined to save, determined also to save by means; He determined to save no man without faith, and to give

no man faith except through the knowledge of the truth. The means are as much in the decree as in the result, and in using the means we hope to see the result following according to the Will of God.

The apostles who were sent to the householder, afford us a few instructive lessons. Mark carefully, that all the disciples were quite willing to go. You observe it is said, "His disciples said unto Him, Where will You that we go and prepare that You may eat the Passover?" So every Christian should be anxious and willing to win souls to God—as well the sisters as the brothers, as well the weak as the strong, as well the teens as the full-grown men—we should all stand prepared to evangelize the world, and all be anxious to have our Master's blessing upon our work. Let everyone here this morning, who knows Christ in his heart, be saying, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" Let us each be in the spirit of Isaiah when he cried "Here am I; send me!" At the same time, the Master did not employ the whole of the 12 in this case, but preferred to send Peter and John. So in the conversion of His people, He more frequently blesses His chosen servants, His ministers of truth—these turn many to righteousness, and bring many captives to the Captain. He chooses His Peters and his Johns who have had the most familiar acquaintance with Himself, and are best adapted to deliver His gracious message, and upon these He puts special honor, thus manifesting His sovereignty in the distribution of both gifts and graces. Let every man who seeks to preach the gospel learn to do his Lord's work in the style of Peter and John, who went not without being sent and commissioned. No man has any right to aspire to the Christian pastorate without a call from the Most High. There must come to us a setting apart, an ordination not of man, but by the eternal Spirit making us to be vessels of mercy unto the nations. When we obtain this anointing and appointment, we must take care that we go about our work in our Master's way. These men were not to go blundering into the city, hurrying to knock at the first door they might hit upon; they must look out for the man with the water pot, and follow him. I think I see them. How anxiously they look around! And when they see the man, they ask no questions of him—that was not in the command—they follow blindly where he leads. I mark the holy joy in their faces as they see the water carrier stop at a door, and put down his load! How confidently they enter the house, and inquire for the landlord! The Master has given them the sign, they see the countersign, and feel that all is well.

The story reminds you of Eleazar, the servant of Abraham, when seeking a wife for Isaac. He too had an appointed sign—the damsel would say, "Drink, and I will give your camels drink also"; and lo, Rebekah came, and just what he had asked she might do, she did, and then the man lifted up his heart to God, and blessed the God of his Master Abraham for giving him good speed on his errand.

If we would seek souls, we must follow the indications of God's will, we must be like the handmaidens whose eyes watch their mistresses; we must be anxious to detect the first sign of divine grace, to observe the kindling of the new-born life in the awakened soul, to discover the first incomings of the divine light into the thick darkness of the natural heart; and then we must follow our Master's will—not inventing this clap-trap

and that excitement as new methods of revival, not fashioning new gospels of our own, but keeping close to the all-perfect gospel of our blessed God, preaching the truth of God simply after the apostolic precedent, believing that in this way, and in this way only, we may expect to see the revival which we seek.

The Master's word of power comes to men, then, by instrumentality. Dear hearers, you who are not converted, never neglect the means of divine grace, because it is through the means that God's blessing will be most likely to come to you. "Being in the way, the Lord met with me." I have heard of a young lad who was observed to be especially attentive to the sermon, and when he was asked the reason, he said, "Because I believe that if there is anything likely to do me good, Satan is sure to prevent my hearing it if possible, and therefore I listen with all my heart in the hope that I may hear to my soul's profit." You will not listen long in vain, if you listen so. In the pools of the gospel, men mostly catch what they fish for, and if you come to hear the word desiring salvation, you will, I trust, soon obtain it. If you resort to the place of worship merely to pass the time away, or to hear a popular preacher, you cannot expect a blessing from God; but if you come here breathing the prayer, "Lord, meet with me—Jesus, save me today," I do not doubt that whoever the preacher may be, God will visit you through him, and hear your prayer.

In the third place, although we are now speaking of Christ's effectual power, yet *the man's will was consulted.* Peter and John said to him, "The Master says, Where is the guest chamber?" They did not push themselves into the guest chamber, and say to the owner, "We take possession of this parlor in the Master's name whether you like it or not; we have come here, and we mean to stay here; our Master sent us, and we shall not go away." Nothing of the kind! The man's chamber was his own, and the Lord Jesus Christ respects the man's household rights by calling him "the good man of the house"—the master, the proprietor, the landlord of it. So it is in conversion. Men are brought to God by the effectual power of divine grace, but grace never violates, though it subdues, the human will. They make a great mistake who think that God treats men as if they were logs—God knows they are not logs, and never treats them so. He has made them in His own image, to be free, intelligent agents, and He acts upon them as free agents. It is difficult for some men to understand how grace can be effectual and Almighty, and yet man can still be a free agent. Now, if persons cannot see this, we are not bound to give them understandings, but the two things are consistent enough: prejudice creates the difficulty, there is none really. A man may be free enough, and yet he may be so overwhelmingly persuaded to a certain course that he cannot do otherwise; such moral power does not at all interfere with true liberty. If we taught that men were saved against their wills, and that physical force was put upon them to make them Christians, we would deserve to be denounced as talking nonsense, or worse; but the power which we speak of is moral, spiritual, persuasive, and operates in strict accordance with the usual laws of mind. The grace of God does no violence to the will, but sweetly overcomes its obstinacy, making it a willing captive. The force that we speak of at any time when we speak of the power of divine grace, must be understood by you all to be a force

in consistency with the original constitution of manhood; and evermore, although our Lord works upon men according to His own will, yet He always so works upon them as thinking, judging, willing men, and not as substances which are to be hammered, broken, or twisted by brute force.

My hearers, you must not expect that you will be dragged into heaven by the ears, or whirled into salvation by the hair of your heads; if you are ever saved, the heart must be changed, and your whole being must freely consent to the rule of grace. If you are ever born-again, you will be made willing in the day of God's power. His grace will come to you to remove your prejudices, to overcome your obstinacy, and to make you willingly obedient to the divine sway. How anxiously I wish that you had such a will this morning! May the Lord bow your will by the divine power of His love, and may you say today, "Lord, I will to be saved; *I* am willing to renounce sin and lay hold on eternal life." You shall never find God's will behind yours. Where He *gives* a willing mind, think it to be the indication of His own merciful willingness. When grace has brought you to be willing to accept Christ, then be not afraid, but believe at once.

But now, in the next place, although his will was consulted, yet, *through a mysterious power exerted by our Lord, the householder raised no question,* but at once cheerfully and joyfully opened his guest chamber. He was not compelled to give up his upper room, but yet he did it as surely as if force had been used. We do not observe the slightest hesitation. He acted as if he had said, "Come in, and welcome; I owe too much to your Master to refuse." Perhaps this man had seen his child raised to life; perhaps he had been a leper, and been healed; perhaps he had been lame and been restored; at any rate, he was a friend of Christ. Who he was, and what he was, we do not know, but he joyfully accepted the honor which the Redeemer proposed to confer upon him. By this shall we know today, who are the Lord's chosen and who are not; for when the gospel comes to some, they fight against it, and will not have it, but where men receive it, welcoming it, and blessing God that it has come to them, this is a sure indication that there is a secret work going on in the soul, and that God has chosen them unto eternal life. Are you willing, dear hearer, to receive Christ? Are you this day content to take Him and hold Him to be your all in all? Then there is no difficulty in the way; you may have Him; His own power is working with you, making you willing, and the invitation is, "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

As for this man, I may say in conclusion, that *he had the unspeakable honor of entertaining Christ* in his upper room at the last supper at which our Savior sat before His death; and, O brothers and sisters, if you and I receive Christ into our hearts, what an honor to entertain the Son of God this side of the stars! The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, all the glories of paradise are too little for the splendor of His person and the dignity of His merits, and yet He condescends to find a house within our narrow hearts! We are not worthy that He should come under our roof, but what an unutterable privilege when He condescends to enter, for then He makes a feast, and causes our souls to feast with Him upon such royal dainties as Solomon in all his glory could not spread! We sit at a banquet where the food is immortal, and gives immortality to those

who feed on them. If you have ever feasted with the Well-Beloved, I am sure you will wish the festival would never break up; you will long for the time when you may eat the bread of heaven in heaven, and drink the wine of the new kingdom in glory, and go no more out, but abide with the Father world without end. Happy, thrice happy is the man who entertains the angels' Lord.

Thus have I outlined the story of effectual grace. Christ's grace comes to us while we are yet dead in sin: we are called by it; instrumentality is used, yet the secret power of God does it all; and as a result of it, we by entertaining the Savior, are greatly honored and eminently blessed. Now, is there not here, for believers, a theme for earnest praise? Brothers and sisters, if Christ has entered into your hearts and mine, and that entrance was effected wholly through His grace, let us magnify Him exceedingly!—

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin."

Let us extol the amazing love which has worked in us so mightily to redeem us from our natural hardness of heart. Let those refuse to sing who have never known their obligations to sovereign grace; but those of us who feel our debt, must praise the lavish hand which has dealt so bountifully with us.

And ought not this, moreover, to encourage every worker for God? Beloved, if the Master can thus find a banqueting house when He seems to be altogether destitute, and find it with but a word, let us never despair of the salvation of any man; let us go forth to our labor for souls, believing that the Lord will still find Himself a lodging within men's hearts. What if nine out of 10 of the unconverted here should say, "We will not admit the Savior," yet there is a remnant according to the election of grace who will welcome Him! We may be content to be rebuffed with a 100 negatives, if but one soul is obedient to our message. If we had to preach to thousands year after year, and never rescued but one soul, that one soul would be a full reward for all our labor, for a soul is of countless price. Let us be of good courage, the Master may give us all our hearers as our hire if He wills to do so; He can subdue the most hard heart with a word, and make our ministry, which has been barren up to this moment, suddenly become fruitful to His glory. God grant that many this day may learn what effectual grace is, and Christ shall have all the praise.

II. During the second part of our discourse, we shall regard the question of the text as the AFFECTIONATE INQUIRY OF THE LORD'S SERVANTS.

We have not, this morning, any verbal direction as to any special person in this house. I am not told to speak especially to that young man, or to yonder young woman; I am not directed to address the appeals of the gospel to those who may be sitting in this area, or to those in the galleries; I am not at all directed, as were Peter and John; still the directions to the gospel-preacher are very sufficient and plain; here they are, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." I am not called to preach to the elect alone—I do not know them. I know that my

message will be of no service to any but the chosen, but, in order that it may come to these, it is our work to address it to all; we cast the net into the sea, and the Lord sends us what fish He wills. To one and all, therefore, of you who have not known Christ, I have this question to ask—"The Master says, Where is the guest chamber?"

I will explain the question first. Christ Jesus would have entertainment in the human heart. He says, "Where is the heart in which I may dwell? Where is the soul that is ready, this morning, to open its gates that I may enter in and dwell there?" Now, observe that I am not asking you the question, "Where is Christ?" for your answer would be a very distressing one—you have not found Him. There are, I hope, many scores and hundreds here who have admitted Him into the inner chamber of their spirits, and are now enjoying fellowship with Him, but to you unconverted ones I put no question as to that matter, for you are strangers to communion with Jesus. Nor am I asking, "Where is there a feast for the Master, where will He find a festival of virtue and good works?" No, but, "Where is there room for Him?" *He* will bring the feast—the chamber is all He asks. Christ asks nothing good from you—he only asks the empty room in which He may spread the good things which He will bring with Himself. The Master asks you not to prepare the feast, for you are penniless in your natural estate; you have absolutely nothing upon which He can feed, for you have not even food for your own soul; and you have spent your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not. He asks for an empty chamber—this is all. Room for the Savior! Room for the Savior! Room for the Savior to enter and dwell! It is not your virtues, your excellences, nor anything good of you that He asks for, but simply the empty room in which you are willing to entertain Him. The question is, simply and alone, "Where is the guest chamber?" Not, "Where is the guest chamber that is sumptuously decorated, and made fit for the great King?" Not, "Where is the chamber that is glittering with gilded panels and pavements of mosaic?" Jesus seeks no lofty chamber in which to lodge; no, if there is one of you who has a heart lofty and proud, Christ will not come to you, for all the splendor of your pretended goodness are faded and stained in His sight. He dwells not with the proud, nor with the great; but if you have a broken heart and a contrite spirit, "to this man will I look, and with this man will I dwell, says the Lord." Are you guilty? Well, that need not keep the sin-atoning Priest away. Is the guest chamber of your heart all soiled and foul? Is it full of evils? Jesus Christ does not inquire concerning that; He only asks you if you are willing that He should come in and dwell there, and if you say, "Yes," it will be His business to cleanse the chamber and fit it for Himself. Only, "Where is a guest chamber?" Is there a heart here, this morning that is open to Jesus? Is there a man or woman who has room for the Lord of glory?

Still further explaining the question, let me remark that some offer Christ a room which He cannot accept as a guest chamber. Yes, they will receive Christ into their heads, they have no objection to believe the truths taught in the Bible concerning Him with a notional faith. My Lord will not eat the Passover there. No, you may be very orthodox indeed, and exceedingly sound in doctrine, but when Jesus comes into the house, He

will have the best parlor, namely, the *heart*. Not here in the cold attic of the brain, but there in the warm parlor of the heart, there must Jesus dwell. Are you willing this day to have Christ to be your Lord *and* Savior? Soul, soul, are you willing to trust Christ with your eternal interests? Are you willing, now, to hang upon Him as the vessel hangs upon the nail, having no other dependence? Are you willing to become His servant, to do what He bids you? Are you willing to be His friend, to find your best solace in fellowship with Him? Are you willing now, all guilty and defiled as you are, to accept His righteousness as your righteousness, and His blood as your cleansing? Does your mind bring out the keys of the heart's castle, and offer them to the King, and do you say, "Come in, my Lord, come in! I have too long stood out against You, and resisted all the invitations of Your grace, but now lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you doors of my spirit, that the King of glory may come in"? That is all I ask of you. No merits am I sent to seek after, nothing good am I bid to seek in you; only if you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of this land; if you are willing to trust Him, then I have found out the man with whom Christ is predestinated to dwell. God has given the will—He will surely work the way. He has made you cheerfully to be His host; He is equally willing to be your guest. Where is the guest chamber? I cannot very well come round to all of you and take you by the hand and say, "Is there a guest chamber, my friend, in your heart?"—it might take too long a time to pass from pew to pew to ask you the question, but I do desire to ask it (and to press it very earnestly) to each one, "The Master says, Where is the guest chamber?"

Did you notice, when I read the passage in Luke just now, that it ran a little differently from what it does in Mark?—"The Master says *unto you*, Where is the guest chamber?" I trust He says that to some of you in the singular, and with singular power. The Master says to *you*, this morning, this day of grace, this hour of love which you have been spared to see, though you might well have been cut down in your sins, the Master says unto *you*, "Mary, John, Where is the guest chamber?" Take my advice and give a speedy affirmative answer to that question, and may this be the day when Jesus shall enter in triumph into your soul.

I will tell you, in a minute or two, why it is that I feel earnest to press this question, "The Master says, Where is the guest chamber?" I press it first for His sake—yes, all His true servants long to get Him entertainment in human hearts. Sometimes I have thought upon my own ministry, and I have said, "Yes, during the time in which I have been pastor of the church, we have carried out many great works; we have built a vast house for prayer, erected houses for alms-women, orphanages for the young, and carried on the college, but what would all this be if these were the only results of gathering this people together, and preaching to them from Sunday to Sunday? *The only success that is worth having is the winning of souls!* If we do not see souls brought to Christ to bow at His feet, and acknowledge Him as King, we go back to our closet, crying, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Christ must be crowned in men's hearts or we pine with grief. We cannot be satisfied to see Him stand in the street, His head wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night—we must have the Son of

God entertained, for oh, it grieves us even unto brokenness of heart; it troubles us exceedingly that He should be treated so badly who loved us so well; that He should be rejected who gave up heaven and all its glories that He might redeem us from going down to hell. By the wounds of Christ, and by the bloody sweat that covered Him when He redeemed us from our sins, we do beseech you listen to this voice, "Where is the guest chamber?" and reply, "Lord, that guest chamber is in my soul today."

We press this upon you also for our own sake. We are afraid lest we shall be found unprofitable servants. If you can be won to Christ, so much the more joy and rejoicing to us, for what is our crown of rejoicing? Is it not *you*, in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ? But most of all, we press this upon you for your own soul's sake. O beloved, if you do but entertain Christ, you will have entertained heaven. You will be no losers by loving Christ, but unspeakable gainers. Trust in Jesus, and your sins are forgiven you, a bright future is secured, and the vile past is blotted out. Get Christ, and if you are ever so poor, or ever so full of pain, yet are you to be envied; but oh, if you live and die without Christ, we scarcely dare to picture the scene around your dying bed—imagination refuses to lift the curtain, and to view your soul in a disembodied state driven forever from hope; but we recollect that dreadful text, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." We cannot bear it that you should know the eternity of God's wrath; that you should have to feel the perpetual flame of the divine anger! Oh, for your own sake, if you have any true self-love, and would be delivered from eternal misery, open wide your heart, that Jesus Christ may enter in.

Do you still ask, "But what do you mean by 'Where is the guest chamber?'" I will answer it yet again. Jesus Christ deserves from you a simple, personal, immediate, undivided faith in Himself. Wherever Christ comes, He comes to be trusted; you must trust Him wholly, rejecting all confidences of your own; trust Him at this moment, and do not postpone or put off faith to a more convenient season. If Jesus Christ is to be the guest in the guest chamber of your heart, you must now give yourself up wholly to Him, for—

"Know, nor of the terms complain,
Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign,
To reign, and with no partial sway—
Lusts must be slain that disobey."

If you trust Christ, you must then obey Christ. In the power of the Spirit sin will have to be cast out, for Christ will not eat the Passover with sin reigning in the chamber. All the lusts of the flesh must be renounced: He will make you to renounce them, for Christ will not feast with you while you enjoy the dainties of sin. Christ will have no fellowship with Belial: He will not sit at the same table as the devil. Are you willing now? It is all I ask. Has His Spirit made you willing by His power to give up favorite sins, to renounce secret lusts, to be molded and fashioned by the divine hand, and made to be vessels fit for divine use? Are you willing to have Christ for your *Master and your Savior?* Where, where is the guest chamber? My Master, You know! Would God some voice would say, "Here it is!"

For, remember (and then I have done), if you entertain not Christ now, the day will come when you will wish you had, but wish in vain, in the

day you shall see Him upon His throne, and He shall say to you, "You rejected Me, and now I reject you. You heard the gospel—you were invited, you were pleaded with; but you had no ear to all My invitations." In that day, when He has no ear for you, but when He deals out the thunderbolts of His just anger, you will wish that you had listened to Him! Oh, I would to God I could make men look upon their Sabbaths and the sermons they hear as they will look upon them another day. How many there are today wringing their hands in torment, and crying, "O that we could hear the gospel again! O for another invitation to come to Christ! But it is past now; the hour of mercy is struck, and we have come into the eternity of vengeance, where there are no acts of pardon passed, and no hopes held out for souls to escape from their everlasting misery," O be wise, now! "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Today, while yet His Spirit pleads with men, make your souls guest chambers for Him, and, if you admit Him now, you will rejoice exceedingly in that day when He comes in His glory! It will be no mean joy to the believer to say, when He sees His Lord in the clouds of heaven, "By His effectual grace I have known Him before; I received Him into my heart when men spoke evil of Him; when He was rejected, I accepted Him; when He walked through the streets, and they were miry, and He was clothed in rags, I took Him in; He was hungry and I fed Him; He was sick and in prison, and I visited Him, and ministered to Him." Oh, it will be joy unspeakable for the soul to hear Him say, "Inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you did it unto Me; you have been with Me in My temptations, you shall be with Me in My glory; you shared My tribulations and humiliations, and now you shall partake in all My triumphs; you shall sit at My right hand forever and ever." May this be the portion of every person within these walls, and may God be glorified in each one of us, not in His justice, but in His mercy, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 22:1-30.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS
NO. 786

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 22, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen of angels, Preached unto the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up into glory."
1 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV).

THE Apostle had just reminded Timothy that the Church of the Living God is the pillar and ground of the Truth of God, and he had pressed it upon him to behave himself aright in the midst of those faithful men to whom the Lord had committed the Gospel; and, lest by any means the youthful minister should think that the treasure committed to the Church was of little value, he declares that beyond all controversy it was great and precious. Every heathen religion had its mystery, its secret doctrine revealed only to the initiated, which was held to be the essence of the faith. The mystery of some religions was mere froth, foolish if untrue, and if true of no consequence to anyone; but even those who do not believe the facts of our religion can hold no controversy with us about the unspeakable greatness of them, if they are indeed true. Be a man what he may, if he is reasonable he will admit that Christianity does not deal in trifles. Like the eagle, it does not hawk for flies, it aspires to conquer the loftiest themes of thought. Right or wrong, the subjects with which we deal are not secondary, but wear about them an awesome interest which none but the frivolous despise. Jesus sits in no second place among teachers. Paul mentions what the mystery of godliness is, and declares that it concerns the manifestation of God in human flesh, that He might save men from their sin. Now, says he, without controversy this is a great matter, if it is received by us as true, it becomes us to act as those who are put in trust with a priceless deposit with which we dare not be otherwise than faithful. There is no room for indifference where the Gospel is concerned—it is either the most astounding of shams, or the most amazing of Revelations; no man can safely remain undecided about it, it is too weighty, too solemn to be snuffed at as a matter of no concern. Foes and friends alike confess that the mystery of godliness is great: it is no rippling rill of dogma, but a broad ocean of thought, no molehill of discovery, but an Alp of Revelation, no single beam of light but a sun shining at its strength.

I shall, this morning, first take up *the Apostle's summary of our religion;* secondly, I shall give *a few notes upon it;* and, thirdly, draw one or two *inferences from it.*

I. First let us carefully look at THE SUMMARY OF TRUE RELIGION handed by the Apostle to his son in the faith.

1. The first article in this most authentic Apostle's Creed declares that *"God was manifest in the flesh."* This is claimed as an especially valuable part of the great mystery of godliness. My Brothers and Sisters, if you will carefully consider it, this is one of the most extraordinary Doctrines

that was ever declared in human hearing, for were it not well attested, it would be absolutely incredible that the Infinite God who fills all things, who Was and Is, and Is to Come, the Almighty, the Omniscient, and the Omnipresent, actually condescended to veil Himself in the garments of our inferior clay. He made all things, and yet He deigned to take the flesh of a creature into union with Himself: the Infinite was linked with the infant, and the Eternal was blended with mortality. That manger at Bethlehem, tenanted by the express Image of the Father's Glory, was a great sight indeed to those who understood it. Well might the angels troop forth in crowds from within the gates of pearl, that they might behold Him whom Heaven could not contain, finding accommodation in a stable with a lowly wedded pair. Wonder of wonders! God Over All, Blessed Forever, became One with a newborn Babe which slept in a manger where the horned oxen fed.

"God was manifest in the flesh." In this Paul testifies not merely to our Lord's birth, but to the whole of the Divine Manifestation in His life of 32 or 33 years. He was abundantly manifest among the multitudes, and before His disciples during the latter part of His life. He was God in miracles most plenteous, but He was Man in sufferings most pitiable. He was the Son of the Highest, and nevertheless, "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." He trod the billows of the obedient sea, and yet He owned not a foot of land in all Judea. He fed thousands by His Power, and yet all faint and weary He sat upon a well, and cried, "Give Me a drink." He cast out devils, but was Himself tempted of the devil. He healed all manner of diseases, and was Himself exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. Winds and waves obeyed Him, every element acknowledged the august Presence of Deity, and yet He was tempted in all points like as we are. Our Lord's Manhood was no phantasm, no myth, no mere appearance in human shape: beyond all doubt "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "Handle Me and see," He said, "a Spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have." "Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." Yet with equal certainty *God* was manifest in Him. As the light streams through the lantern, so the Glory of Godhead flamed through the flesh of Jesus, and those who were His nearest companions bear witness—"We beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth."

That revelation of God in the flesh became yet more extraordinary when, at last, our Lord condescended to be put to death by His own creatures. Arraigned before human tribunals, condemned as guilty of the gravest crimes, He is taken from prison and from judgment, with none to declare His generation; He is fastened to the accursed wood, and put to a death of deepest shame and bitterest torture. O you whose loving eyes have looked upon the blood which gushed from the wounds of your bleeding Lord, and have delighted to behold the Lily of the Valleys reddened into the Rose of Sharon with the crimson of His own blood, you can see God in Christ as you behold rocks splitting, the sun darkened, and the dead arising from their tombs at the moment of His departure from the earth—behold in the writhing form of the Crucified Man the Vengeance and the Love of God, nor less behold Divine Power sustaining

the load of human guilt, and Divine Compassion enduring such agonies for rebels so ill-deserving. Truly this Son of Man was also the Son of God.

Beloved, this is a mystery surpassing all comprehension. If any man should attempt to explain, or even to define the Union of the Divine and Human in the Lord Jesus, he would soon prove his folly. The scholars of the Dark Ages were very fond of asking puzzling questions about what they called the Hypostatical Union of the Deity and Humanity of Christ. They could not cast so much as a ray of light upon the subject; they amused themselves with enigmas and lost themselves in labyrinths. It is enough for us to know that the Incarnation is a glorious fact, and it suffices us to hold it in its simplicity. God was manifest in the flesh of Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word.

Beloved, this is *a great mystery—great because it treats of God.* Any Doctrine which relates to the Infinite and the Eternal is of the utmost weight. We should be all ears and all heart when we have to learn concerning God. Reason teaches us that He who made us, who is our Preserver, and at whose Word we are soon to return to the dust, should be the first object of our thoughts. Turn here, you wayward children of Adam, and behold this great mystery, for your God is here. A bush burning and unconsumed would attract your curious gaze: what do you think of a Man who was in Union with the God who is a Consuming Fire? The Truth of God manifest in flesh is great if you consider *the great honor which is thereby conferred upon manhood.* How is man honored in God's taking the Nature of man into Union with Himself, for verily He took not upon Him the nature of angels, but He took upon Him the seed of Abraham, whichever of all the creatures shall come nearest to the Creator will evidently have the preeminence in the ranks of creatureship, which then shall bear the palm. Shall not the seraphs be chosen? Shall not the swift-winged sons of fire be chief among Heaven's courtiers? Behold, and be astonished, a worm is preferred, a rebellious child of the earth is chosen! Human nature is espoused into Oneness with the Divine! There is no gulf between God and redeemed man at this hour. God is first, over all, blessed forever, but next comes man in the Person of the Man Christ Jesus. Well may we say with David, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet." Man is royal now that Christ is Human. Man is exalted since Christ is humiliated. Man may go up to God now that God has come down to man. This is great, is it not? A mystery, certainly, but great in every way. See that you despise it not, lest you miss the abounding benefit which flows to man through this golden channel.

My Brothers and Sisters, the mystery appears greatest of all because *it is so nearly connected with our Eternal Redemption.* There could have been no putting away of sin by vicarious suffering if God had not become Incarnate. Sin is not removed except by an Atonement, neither would any person have sufficed to atone but one of like nature to those who had offended. By man came death; by man also must come resurrection. Jesus appears as Man to save His people from their sins, by taking the

sins of His people upon Himself, and offering a Propitiation for them. What a wondrous sight was the dying Redeemer! The Cross is the focus of all human history—I was almost going to say it is the center of the life of God, if such a thing can be. All the ages meet in Calvary. Jesus is the central Sun of all events. O, gaze again, and marvel more and more that God should put Himself into the place of His offending creature, and in the Person of His dear Son, should offer to Eternal Justice a compensation for the insults which sin had cast upon law and rule! There is no greatness in Heaven or earth if it is not here in the bleeding flesh of Jesus, the Son of God. All else is dwarfed into nothingness in His Presence.

Beloved, the manifestation of God in Jesus Crucified will appear to be great to you if you have ever drank deep into its meaning. If, standing at the foot of the Cross, you have seen all your sins punished in the Person of the Incarnate God, and have heard the Voice which says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," you cannot think lightly of the Word made flesh. If you have learned that His blood has brought perfect pardon to all Believers, and that through the torn veil of His flesh the saints have access to God and entrance into Heaven, you will lay hold upon the great Truth of an Incarnate Deity with a grasp which neither the trials of life nor the terrors of death shall unclasp; you will hate the very thought of denying the Godhead of the Lord that bought you—you will be jealous for His great name, and burn with sacred zeal for His Glory. Your heart will cry out indignantly, "Away from me, you rejecters of the Divine Redeemer; if you rob Christ of His Glory, I count you the worst of thieves. 'Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father,' and in denying Jesus you reject the one God Himself!"

2. The Apostle mentions, in the next place, the important Witness by which the mission of Jesus was confirmed. He was *"Justified in the Spirit."* By the word "Spirit," we understand the Holy Spirit, although it may be understood of the spiritual Nature of Christ in which He was always Justified, though in the flesh He was condemned of men. It appears more natural to confine the expression to the Holy Spirit. Every religion demands our attention in proportion to the certainty of its teachings, and the value of its confirmatory testimony. How matchless is the seal which is set upon the mystery of godliness, since the Holy Spirit has been pleased Himself, Personally and repeatedly to confirm it! If we demand trustworthy evidence, behold the Holy Spirit bearing Witness to our most holy faith, both in Heaven and in earth!—"It is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth." Observe what part the Holy Spirit took in connection with our Lord. The formation of the Immaculate Body of the Holy Child Jesus was by the Energy of the Holy Spirit—as the angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God." Afterwards, the Holy Spirit confirmed this same most sacred Person, in whom God was manifest, by descending upon Him at His Baptism in the waters of Jordan. John, who was the forerunner and witness of Jesus, bore record, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him; and I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining

on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."

The heavens were opened, and the Spirit, the Voice of God, proclaimed, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." On one or two other occasions we have it upon the testimony of witnesses who were present, that an audible Voice was heard out of the excellent glory, saying, "This is My beloved Son: hear Him!" The greatest attestation which the Holy Spirit gave to Christ was the raising of Him from the dead. In some respects Christ rose from the dead by His own Power, but it is a Scriptural Doctrine that He was "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." The Power by which we are converted is evidently the Holy Spirit, and we read in the Ephesians, "The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." Moreover, let us not forget that 40 days after our Master had been taken up from us, while the disciples were gathered together with one accord in one place, suddenly they heard a sound as of a rushing mighty wind which filled all the place where they were sitting; the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus had promised, had come to make good the Word of the Lord. You have not forgotten the miraculous flames of fire which sat upon each of the disciples, and how they spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance! You know how that day 3,000 were converted to the faith by the testimony of those first champions of Christ! Thus the Holy Spirit bore Witness with signs and miracles, and wondrous gifts, that He who professed to be Incarnate Deity was most truly God and the Savior of men.

Beloved, if you complain that this attestation has now ceased, and that the record of miracles is rather a strain upon your faith than an assistance to it, I would remind you that the Spirit of God has not ceased from the midst of the Church. The Holy Spirit no longer operates upon material substances, the sick are not healed, and the dead are not raised—this we freely confess; but He still acts with equally wonderful results upon the minds of men. In this very house there have been miracles performed, which, in lasting value, put the raising of the dead to shame. Many of us who are now present bear witness that by the Spirit of God we have been newly created, raised from spiritual corruption, delivered from the dominion of Satan, and translated into the kingdom of God. The swine of drunkenness have been made lovers of holiness, the beasts of sensuality have become partakers of the Divine Nature; what better sign is needed? When hearts of stone melt like wax, and streams of penitence flow from souls as hard as flinty rocks, who will refuse to believe? Let the Gospel be judged by its *fruits,* and we are satisfied with the trial. If it does not turn the moral desert into an Eden, transform the lion into a lamb, and raise up the beggar from the dunghill, then let it be rejected; but since it has done this, and is doing it, let its despisers beware lest they commit the sin against the Holy Spirit while they reject the solemn evidences which He daily thrusts before our eyes.

Brothers and Sisters, in our own souls the blessed Spirit has borne most overwhelming Witness when we have been bowed in penitence at Jesus' feet, and have been lifted up into the loftiest joy as we found pardon in His blood. The Spirit of God is with us still, working with the Word

of God. See the savage casting away his weapons, the cannibal softened into the man. What philosophy could not do and did not care to attempt—what civilization never could have accomplished alone, the Cross of Christ has effectually performed. The Spirit of God is with us, and both in the holiness of the saints, and in the conversions of unbelievers, He bears Witness that God was in Christ.

3. Our Apostle writes, as the next part of the great mystery of godliness, that Christ *"was seen of angels."* Jesus was seen of angels at His birth; they appeared to the shepherds, and bade them hasten to Bethlehem, while they themselves looked on with holy wonder—

"They saw the Heaven-born Child, in human flesh arrayed,
Benevolent and mild, while in a manger laid;
And praise to God, and peace on earth,
For such a birth, proclaimed aloud."

Our Lord was watched by holy spirits in the wilderness where, after He had conquered that arch tempter, angels ministered unto Him. He was with the wild beasts at one moment, and seraphic spirits waited in His train. An angel ministered unto Him in Gethsemane, when His sweat was as it were great drops of blood. Upon Calvary they watched Him too, and doubtless, as the poet says—

"Around the bloody tree they pressed with strong desire
That wondrous sight to see, the Lord of Life expire;
And, could their eyes have known a tear,
Had dropped it there in sad surprise."

Visions of angels were seen by the witnesses of His Resurrection. Two clothed in white sat the one at the head and the other at the foot where the Body of Jesus had lain. Angels met Him at His Ascension, when the clouds received Him out of the sight of His gazing followers; and they attended Him up to Glory, crying, "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in."

The Apostle mentions this to show the greatness of our religion, since the most noble intellects are interested in it. Did you ever hear of angels hovering around the assemblies of philosophical societies? Very interesting papers are sometimes produced speculating upon geological facts; startling discoveries are every now and then made as to astronomy and the laws of motion; we are frequently surprised at the results of chemical analyses; yet I do not remember ever reading even in poetry that angelic beings have shown any excitement at the news. The fact is, that the story of the world's history in geologic times, and all the facts about this world, are as well known to angels as the letters of the alphabet are to us; all our profound sciences and hidden theories must seem utterly contemptible to them. Those august minds which have been long ago created of God, and preserved from defilement by His Decree, are better able to judge than we are of the importance of things; and when we find them deeply interested in a matter, it cannot be of small account. Concerning an Incarnate God, it is said, "which things the angels desire to look into." Their views of God's manifesting Himself in the flesh are such, that over the Mercy Seat they stand with outspread wings gazing in reverent admiration, and before the Throne they sing, "Worthy is the Lamb, for He was slain."

The Doctrine of Incarnate Deity, may be folly to the Greeks, and the vainglorious wiseacres of this world may call it commonplace, but to an-

gels it is an ever flowing fountain of adoring admiration. They turn from every other sight to view the Incarnate Redeemer, regarding His condescending deed of Divine Grace as a bottomless ocean of mystery, a topless steep of wonder. Jesus was seen of angels, and they still delight to gaze upon Him—this, to the Apostle's mind was conclusive evidence that the Doctrines of our faith are of the greatest importance.

4. Then, he passes on to the next Truth, Jesus Christ was *preached unto the Gentiles.* Was this a great thing? Is preaching a wonder? Yes. The preaching of the Gospel proves conclusively the grandeur of our religion. The nearest to Christ were the angels—He was seen of them: The furthest from Christ were fallen Gentiles, who had given themselves up to the worship of the works of their own hands, to these also Jesus came. That Jesus Christ was preached to the Gentiles at all, was a wonder which it behooves us not to forget. As Paul says, "Therefore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands: that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus you who some times were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of two one new man, so making peace."

The Gentiles were brutalized with groveling vices, and no form of spiritual faith had ever found footing among them—was then the most spiritual of all religions to be taught to *them*, and carried to them by no other means than that of preaching? This surprised our Apostle; and what surprises me still more is this, that Christ was preached to the Gentiles *by Jews*—that those whose bigotry at that time was invincible, so that they could not imagine such a thing as a Gentile being in covenant with God, were the very men who with indefatigable ardor went among the Gentiles to preach Jesus Christ. If you had told an intelligent Jew that some of his fellow countrymen would become Apostles to the Gentiles, to declare that the wall which surrounded the favored nation was broken down, he would have smiled incredulously, and exclaimed, "Impossible! You may cut the Jew in pieces first. The belief that his race is peculiarly favored of God lies in the very heart and marrow of the Israelite; he will never consent to become one with the Gentile dogs." Yet Jesus the King of the Jews, Israel's hope and consolation, was first published to the heathen by Jews, and chiefly by one who boasted that he was a "Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee." Paul, the most ferocious of bigots, who counted that he did God's service when he hunted out the disciples of Christ, became the Gentile's friend and spiritual father! This is a startling fact.

It is a most noteworthy fact in the history of our faith, that Jesus is still preached among the nations, and the Church labors to make Him known everywhere. What other religion spends so much energy in seeking converts? If any of you were foolish enough to wish to become Jews, you would not be welcomed among the Jewish fraternity. No Israelite ever attempts to proselyte us to his opinions. It would be a novelty indeed

to hear of Jewish missionaries sent out to convert the heathen from their superstitions, or to recover Christians from their errors. No; the Jew does not want us, he prefers to keep his heritage for himself and his heirs. How far different is it with the followers of Jesus, whose very watchword is "preach the Gospel to every creature!" In the case of all other religions, the preaching to the Gentiles is absent. I am not aware of any Muslim society for the conversion of the world to the Prophet. I never saw in the streets of London a Buddhist, come from far, to convert the crowds of London to their doctrines; nor have I ever seen a Buddhist thrusting himself into the midst of peril to win the savage to his creed. Can any other faith than the Christian show me a man traversing alone the center of Africa, like Livingstone, or dwelling alone with Bushmen, as Moffat has done? The fact is that the spirit of false creeds is rather monopoly than extension; but as for the religion of Christ, it is expansive as the arch of Heaven!

If I could, I would have all men saved. If it were possible, I would have every one of you partakers of Christ Jesus this very morning; and we would cheerfully lay down our lives if we could extend the Kingdom of Jesus Christ to the utmost bounds of the earth. What is it that keeps up this incessant preaching of Christ? Nothing but the real force of our faith. O you heathens, if your religions are true, why do you not promulgate them? Gods of the heathen, if you are gods, why do you not command your worshippers to convert the nations to your allegiance? But, no, they confess the worthlessness of their system, in that these systems are not preached among the Gentiles, and have no vitality to secure their spread. When these religions do attempt to spread themselves, which is rare enough, how do they do it? Mohammed put a scimitar into the hand of each one of his followers, and said, "That is the strength of Islamism: use that sharp argument upon the nations." But Christ refused all carnal weapons, and chose the simple preaching of the Word. What other faith can dare to depend upon preaching—upon one man's testimony to other men about Truth precious to himself? Surely this goes to show that the things which we believe are powerful, and worthy to be considered with attentive respect.

5. Another great part of the mystery is that Christ is *believed on in the world.* I will acknowledge that I have often wondered at this sentence, and have asked why Paul should write it down as a great mystery that Christ should be believed on in the world. And yet it is a marvel of marvels. If you think how sunken the world was in vice, how darkened the understanding of man was with ignorance, it is astounding that such men should receive so holy and so spiritual a religion as that which Jesus Christ preached by His servants. We come to you who are fond of sin, and we tell you that you must give up your favorite pleasures, that cherished vices must be abandoned, that holiness which is distasteful to you must rule your life; and yet obnoxious as these things are to flesh and blood, when the Holy Spirit comes with the Word, you believe them and accept them joyfully. The Apostle, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, uses the following language: "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some

of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Was not this extraordinary that such horrible characters should become lovers of the pure and holy Jesus? Must not a religion which can change such as these be something more than a cunningly devised fable?

In another place, we are told of all mankind, "There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one." Is it not a wonder that such depraved minds should perceive beauties in the Lord Jesus, and yield their full confidence to Him? Indeed, to every saved man, it is the greatest miracle of all that he is himself a Believer. When I come to look at the Truths of God upon which I rest, they are very simple indeed, and yet around them so many doubts are cast by the evil of my own heart, that I stand amazed my faith retains her hold. I believe that Christ died for my sins with much more assurance than I believe anything else; no fact in history is one-half as certain to me, and yet, at times, it is so hard to believe it that it is clear to me that true faith is not of man, but is a fruit of the Spirit. Great must be the Truth which forces itself upon the conviction of minds so dark and so ignorant as ours.

The Apostle winds up his summary of the mystery by reminding us that Christ was *"received up into glory."* This is no small Truth surely, that the Apostle and High Priest of our profession has not gone from us into obscurity, but is at this day sitting upon the Throne of God! At this hour Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, upholding all things by the word of His Power. He shall shortly come to be our Judge. He shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the Voice of God, and all men shall be gathered before Him to receive their final sentence. This is no small Truth, but a great one to be proclaimed with zeal. Thus, throughout, the burden of our religion is far from trivial. "Great is the mystery of godliness."

II. I must now detain you with a few NOTES UPON THIS SUMMARY. Paul has here given us an outline of the Christian faith, and we note upon it as follows—

First, *it is all concerning Christ.* Out of these six articles of Paul's creed, they all speak of Christ; from which I gather that if we are to preach the Gospel faithfully, we must preach much concerning Jesus Christ. My dear Brothers, this must be the first, the middle, and end of our ministry. That man of whom it cannot be said that he preaches Christ, does not behave himself aright in the House of God; he evidently is not a messenger sent from Heaven. It is our business here to cry with John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." Brothers and Sisters, as it is ours to preach Christ, so it is yours to receive Him. If you have received a gospel of which Christ is not the top and bottom, throw it away. If you are resting on anything beside Christ Jesus, you are resting upon a rotten foundation. Get off of it, lest you be deceived at the last. But if Christ is All in All to you, and His work and Person are the sum and substance of your hope, then be of good cheer; where Jesus is honored, souls are safely sheltered.

I notice, in the second place, that there is *not here a single word upon Sacramentarianism.* Now, in these days we are perpetually told by men

who are manifestly in earnest, that the great thing is the sacrament. According to their teaching, God has committed to bishops and priests the fullness of His Divine Grace, which we meekly and reverently may receive at their venerable hands. We are told that, in connection with a few drops of water, sprinkled by the successors of the Apostles, children become regenerate; through the laying on of these same blessed hands, we afterwards become confirmed in the faith, and assured of our salvation. We are told that through priestly power we are made partakers of the very body and blood of Christ, which, according to them, becomes literally present through their operation. When we come to die, they can anoint us with oil, consecrated by their power, and by this unction all our sins are forgiven us. The top and the bottom of the system is the priest, the priest, the priest. A man like ourselves, and not a whit better, but 10,000 times worse for his infamous impudence in pretending to be what he is not, this man, dressed out in as many colors as the peacock, is the divinely appointed medium of grace. If this is the Truth of God, Paul did not know it, for, if he had known it, he would say, "Great is the mystery of godliness; God dwells in the priests, hasten and kiss their feet, for by their ceremonials you get salvation." Paul says nothing of the kind. He has nothing to reveal about candles, and capes, and pompous processions; all he has to say is this, "God was manifest in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen of angels, Preached unto the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up into glory," and that is all. How different this simple Gospel from the complex machinery of Catholicism and Anglicanism!

I want you to notice still further, that in this summary there is *no exhibition of mere Doctrine.* I believe, most firmly, in the Doctrines commonly called Calvinism, and I hold them to be filled with comfort to God's people; but if any man shall say that the preaching of these is the whole of the preaching of the Gospel, I am at issue with him. Brothers, you may preach those Doctrines as long as you like, and yet fail to preach the Gospel; and I will go further, and affirm that some who have even denied those Truths of God, to our great grief, have nevertheless been Gospel preachers for all that, and God has saved souls by their ministry. The fact is, that while the Doctrines of Election, Final Perseverance, and so on, go to make up a complete ministry, and are invaluable in their place, yet the soul and marrow of the Gospel is not there, but is to be found in the great fact that "God was manifest in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit," and so on. Preach Christ, young man, if you want to win souls. Preach all the Doctrines, too, for the building up of Believers, but still the main business is to preach Jesus who came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. The Apostle tells us in Corinthians that first of all he delivered unto us as soul-saving Truth, "how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again on the third day, according to the Scriptures." Facts about Christ Jesus, and the promise of life through Him, these are the faith of the Gospel.

Let me also say that I do not perceive anything in this summary *tending remarkably to exalt prophecy.* I would not make this remark were it not that there is a certain troublesome sect abroad nowadays to whom the one thing necessary is a perpetual speculation upon prophecy. All the bells in their steeple ring out, "Prophecy! Prophecy! Prophecy!" They

plume themselves upon an expected *secret rapture,* and I know not what vain imaginings besides! Where prophecy is preached in connection with their shibboleth, there the Gospel is preached, but all ministers beside their own, however honored by God, are railed at by them as part of Babylon against whom men are to be warned. They, indeed, are wise men, and can afford superciliously to look down upon their fellow Christians as the slaves of sect and system, being, I venture to say, far more sectarian than the worst of us, and more bigoted to their system than Roman Catholics themselves! My dear Friends, if you have any time to spare, and cannot find any practical work for Jesus, study the dark places of prophecy, but do not read modern prophetical works, for that is a sheer waste of time and nothing better. Hold off as you would from a serpent from the idea that the study or preaching of prophecy is the Gospel, for the belief that it is so is mischievous beyond conception. The Gospel which is to be vehemently declared is this—"God was manifest in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen of angels, Preached unto the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up into glory." So long as London is reeking with sin, and millions are going down to Hell, let us leave others to prophesy, let us go with anxious hearts to seek after souls, and see if we cannot, by the Spirit's Power, win sinners from going down into the pit of Hell.

You will, doubtless, have observed that this summary of the Gospel is *very simple.* Whenever you meet with teaching which is cloudy and complicated, you may generally conclude that it is not the Gospel of your salvation, for the Truth of Christ is so plain that he who runs may read, and the wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein. Perhaps some of you have been thinking that conversion and salvation are dark and mysterious things, and that you have to pass through many singular operations and feelings in order to be saved. Now, Beloved, the whole of our faith lies in a nutshell. He who believes in Jesus Christ the Incarnate God, is saved. These few Truths of God if grasped by the mind, received and trusted in by the heart, will save you. It is at the Cross that salvation must be found. We have not written over our religion, "Mystery, mystery, mother of harlots," this is the sign of Babylon, but we have this to tell you, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned," and the things which you have to believe are just these simplicities: Jesus the Son of God has come into this world as Man to save men; He has bled and died; He is proclaimed and preached; He is to be received and believed in; He has gone up to Glory to prepare a place for them who trust Him, and that is all.

III. THE INFERENCES I draw from this are just these. If this is a great Gospel, then *how important it is for us to receive it!* If the Gospel were a laborious system of ethics, there are many in this house who never could be saved, for they could not understand it; but since it is so simple, why do men refuse it? "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." O will you not lay hold upon that Truth of God? I do pray the Spirit of God to take your minds off all philosophies and mysteries, that you may come to Jesus only. Trust in Christ and you are saved. Receive this simple Truth. God calls it great; angels think it great; the Holy Spirit attests it to be great; we who preach it feel it to be great; they who receive it acknowledge it to be great; Christ in Glory bears Witness

that it is great; O accept this great salvation! May the Spirit lead you to believe in the Great Savior of great sinners.

Again, if it is so great, *how important it is for us to spread it!* It does not require us to go to college in order to tell of Jesus: we can each in our sphere, publish His fame abroad. If this simple Truth is the message of God to perishing sinners, then in the name of common humanity, and above all, in the name of the Love of Christ, let us deliver it.

How this text ought to encourage us to spread the Gospel. When I am preaching the Gospel, many may say, "Oh, he is only telling us commonplace Truth." Just so, I know that; and yet I feel within myself as if I were wheeling up God's great cannon which will yet blow the gates of Hell to pieces. What? None of the venerable mysteries of Rome? What? None of the new philosophical discoveries? None of the imposing ceremonies? No, Brothers and Sisters, not one of them, they are all wooden guns, shams and counterfeits, and if ever they are fired off they will go to shivers. This plain Truth of God, that "God was made flesh and dwelt among us," is God's great battering ram against which nothing can stand. Never lose heart in the Gospel, my Brothers and Sisters, but think you hear the Apostle calling across the ages, "Great is the mystery of godliness." Look for nothing greater, the Gospel is great enough. Keep to it, never think you have told men enough times about it. As Napoleon told his warriors at the pyramids, "A thousand ages look down upon you!" Bleeding martyrs from their graves, call to you to be faithful; confessors who ascended to Heaven in fiery chariots, implore you to be steadfast. Hold fast that which you have received! Attempt not to mend the Truth, venture not to shape it according to the fancy of the times, but proclaim it in all its native purity.

By this hammer the gods of Rome and Greece were dashed to shivers, by this lever the world was turned upside down; it is this Gospel which has brought Glory to God, filled Heaven with redeemed souls, and made Hell to tremble in all its palaces of flame. Bind it about your heart, and defy the hosts of Rome or Hell to unloose its folds. Wrap it about your loins in death, and hold it as a standard in both your hands in life. This simple Truth of God, that "Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save that which is lost," and that, "whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life," must be your jewels, your treasure, your life!

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST!

By the Grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and more than 500 Spanish translations, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

A SONG, A SOLACE, A SERMON, AND A SUMMONS
NO. 787

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 29, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For His mercy endures forever."
Psalm 136:1.

THIS 136th Psalm was constantly sung in the temple by appointed singers, among whom the names of Heman and Jeduthun are mentioned. These, we are told in the Book of Chronicles, were chosen to give thanks unto Jehovah, whose "mercy endures forever." This continued service of song, was most fitting, for, if Jehovah's mercy endures forever, our praise should endure forever; if His goodness never ceases, our thanksgiving should never be silent.

It seemed to me most appropriate to direct your attention to this text in the closing Sunday of the year, because it is a fit accompaniment to that upon which I addressed you on the first Sunday. [*Good Cheer for the New Year,* Sermon #728.] You will remember that we then spoke of the ever watchful mercy of the Lord our God, from the words, "The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." Having almost reached the close of the year, let us acknowledge that His mercy has been equal to the promise; that God has not failed to fulfill His gracious word, "for His mercy endures forever." May all your hearts be full of gratitude, and the music of your spirits stand in the stead of trumpets and cymbals which of old proclaimed the joy of Israel when they made mention of Jehovah's name.

I. At the outset we shall regard the text as A SONG. So it was originally intended to be used. It was *a song for all singers,* for it was the refrain of each verse, the chorus to be taken up by the whole assembled multitude. I suppose that the practiced singers commenced thus, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good," and then the entire multitude, whether they were taught in psalmody or not, chanted the chorus, "For His mercy endures forever." Then would the choir again sweetly sing, "O give thanks unto the God of gods:" and a fresh burst of many voices would reply, "For His mercy endures forever." In imitation of that ancient mode of singing, I shall ask the whole assembly to make a chorus with their hearts, and mentally to bless the Lord whose "mercy endures forev-

er." Let the young and the old join in the common praise; let the rich and the poor, the instructed and the ignorant, yes, let the saved and the unsaved, each take a part in the choral music, for the psalmist so words the Psalm that even the unconverted may claim a share in it, for he bids us praise God for *common mercies;* common as we frequently call them, and yet so priceless that when deprived of them we are ready to perish. He bids us sing concerning the great lights whose radiance is universally enjoyed. He bids us extol the Maker of the sun and the moon, for without the cheerful light of the celestial lamps we should live in perpetual darkness, if indeed we lived at all. Let us bless God for the eyes with which we behold the sun, for the health and strength to walk abroad in the sunlight; let us praise Him for the mercies which are new every morning, for the bread we eat, for the raiment which clothes us, for houses which give us shelter; let us bless Him that we are not deprived of our reason, or stretched upon the bed of sickness; let us praise Him that we are not cast out among the hopeless, or confined among the guilty; let us thank Him for liberty, for friends, for family associations and comforts; let us praise Him, in fact, for everything which we receive from His bounteous hands, for we deserve little, and yet are most plenteously endowed. "His mercy endures forever"; every morning's light proclaims it, the beams of every moon declare it; every breath of air, every heaving of the lungs, every beating of the pulse, are fresh witnesses that "His mercy endures forever."

But, beloved, the sweetest and the loudest note in the chorus must always be reserved for those who sing of *redeeming love*. A few verses further down the psalmist writes, "To Him that smote Egypt in their firstborn, and brought out Israel from among them, with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, for His mercy endures forever." Yes, God's redeeming acts towards His chosen are forever the favorite themes of praise. Many of us know what redemption means. Let us not refuse our sonnets of thanksgiving. Glory be to God, we have been redeemed from the power of our corruptions, uplifted from the depth of sin in which we were naturally plunged. We have been led to the cross of Christ; our shackles of guilt have been broken off, we are no longer slaves, but children of the living God. We can look back to the source of that redemption in the council chambers of eternity where the plan was first ordained and settled; we can look forward to the results of that redemption, and antedate the period when we shall be presented before the throne of God without wrinkle or any such thing. Even now by faith we wave the palm branch and wrap ourselves about with the fair white linen which is to be our everlasting array, and shall we not this day give thanks to the name of the Lord whose redeeming "mercy endures forever"? Child of God, can you be silent? Shall there be one dumb soul here this morning? Awake,

awake, you heritors of glory, and lead your captivity captive as you cry with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

Further on our poet invites *the experienced* believer to join in the Psalm. Just as some among us, whose voices are deep, can take the bass parts of the tune, so the educated saint, who has been for years in the ways of the Lord, can throw a force and a weight into the song which no other can contribute. We are reminded in the Psalm that the Lord led His people through the wilderness, and smote their enemies, "and gave their land for an heritage: for His mercy endures forever." You who are men and fathers among us, bless the Lord who has safely led you until this hour. The pillar of cloud, the column of fire, you have not seen, and yet you have been conducted as pilgrims in the desert, safely and well. The heavenly manna has been your food, and the water from the living rock has been your drink. Your mightiest foes have been slain with the sword of the Lord. Temptations sharp and strong have not prevailed against you. Trials incessant you have been able to bear. "Up to now the Lord has helped you." What is your experience worth if it does not kindle the flames of gratitude? To what end has God manifested all this goodness to you unless you delight yourself in God in the remembrance of it? Remember all the ways by which the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness! Remember how He has hedged you about, and kept off your enemies, and given you peace within your soul, and fed you with the finest of the wheat! If you are silent, you will be most guilty of all the ungrateful ones. Therefore, believer, take the cymbals, yes, the high-sounding cymbals, and with all your might dance before the ark of the Lord your God, and praise and magnify His holy name.

The peculiar point which is brought out in this chorus is the *enduring* character of divine mercy—"His mercy endures forever." By this I suppose is intended that God's mercy, as an attribute and as a rule of His action, is *continual throughout all ages.* He was a merciful God to our first parents. At the fatal portal of Eden, when they were first driven forth into the world in judgment, the sweet Promise came like the breath of heaven upon them, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Abraham and Isaac and Jacob received mercy at His hands; Samuel and David and Solomon found Him gracious, and the prophets and those who loved the Lord in their days knew that He turned not His love from His people. The multitude understood the abounding mercy of the Most High when healing was given by our Lord on the right hand and on the left. In apostolic times the first champions of the faith drank deep at the fountain of God's love, and afterwards our sires, who upheld the banner of the cross in ages of persecution, trusted in God and bore witness that His mercy endured unto them. It is the same today: God has not

quenched the lamp of His goodness: the river of His mercy flows deep and broad as before.

I was musing upon this—God's mercy through the ages, and I saw as before my eyes the goodness of God conquering the sin of many all along the ages. Did you ever stand upon the field of Waterloo, and see the golden harvest waving there? If so, you have seen how the mercy of God has blotted out the cruelty of man. There where man struggled with his fellow, and dyed the ground crimson with human gore, mercy came and covered all with a robe of emerald, covered with fairest flowers, turning Aceldama into Eden! Moreover, mercy so triumphs over judgment, that before long men look upon the judgments as a noble form of mercy. When our ancient city was consumed by fire, and the distressed inhabitants walked among the ashes of all their precious things, the pulpits rang with the cry of the judgment of God. But what do we say now? Why, that it was a most gracious visitation, destroying pestilence in its lair, and banishing the plague from the land. Thus it is seen that "His mercy endures forever." If Jehovah shall shake the earth with earthquakes, or dash down the dwellings of men with tornadoes, or make the cruel sea to engulf a navy, the after results teem with blessings to mankind, while the judgment itself vanishes, flowers bloom amid the rifts of the earthquakes, and children play where the hot lava ran from the red lips of the volcano! Mercy still abides, and judgment is but for a little season.

Doubtless, also, the psalmist meant that *mercy continues in its fullness.* We make great draughts upon the mercy of God, but we do not diminish it. There are fears that we shall one day exhaust those great storehouses in which the earth's best fuel is laid up. This may be probable, and is certainly possible—a few hundred years will make a heavy demand upon our mineral treasuries; but quarry as you will in the mines of God's blessing, neither you nor your children, nor your children's children shall complain of a deficiency—

"Great God, the treasures of Your love
Are everlasting mines,
Deep as our helpless miseries are,
And boundless as our sins."

May we not also understand by, "His mercy endures forever," that the patience of God abounds? Have you ever reflected upon the infinite, long-suffering of God? Consider for a moment. The sins of men are all before the Lord. You and I can readily put up with offenses which do not touch us in the quick, or actually under our own eyes, but the sinner's sin is perpetrated before the countenance of Jehovah. No word is said behind His back, no blasphemy is uttered in secret to Him: and sin affects God as it does not affect us. We have grown so hardened that the heinousness of iniquity is little discerned by us: we take it as a matter of course. But God, who is infinitely pure, is, if I may use such an expression, infi-

nitely sensitive in regard to sin. He knows sin to be sin, and the heinousness of it, which we do not perceive, is all before His mind continually, and yet His mighty patience reigns over all, and bears with men's iniquities.

Remember, too, that these insults against heaven are constantly repeated. The most patient man at last yields to anger: constant dripping will wear away a stone: but here is God insulted, as I have said, to His face thousands and thousands of times a day, and yet keeps His sword in its scabbard, and bids His thunder sleep! A wish would blast the rebels into everlasting torment, but He wills it not. As the Lord lives He says, He has no pleasure in the death of him who dies, but would rather that he should turn unto Him and live. To all this you must add the reflection that all the while rebellious sinners are partaking of God's mercy—the rebel wears God's gifts of clothes upon his back, and sits at the table of God's providence; the breath that is in his nostrils is the gift of divine charity, and yet the wretch uses this breath against his Maker. Can you understand this? Could you bear to be insulted for a single day by one who was receiving all he had from you? Would you not by-and-by, yes, very speedily say to him, "Get out of here! If you are my enemy, why should I treat you as I treat my friend?" Then be it remembered, that God is not only sparing the guilty, but is putting ways of His mercy before them. Some of you are invited to repent as often as the Sabbath dawns; with some of you there are incessant movings upon your conscience; you seldom pass a day without hearing the voice say, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die?" God is always wooing you to come to Him, inviting you by His mercy and threatening you by His judgments, and yet while His long-suffering should lead you to repentance, you add sin to sin, and ripen in your iniquity.

One thing more I would have you remember and I think you will admire the amazing patience of God, namely that He is doing this with millions! Millions! Perhaps a thousand millions at this moment, for I suppose—though no one can ascertain accurately—there are a thousand millions of unregenerate men upon the face of this earth at this very moment, all enemies of God; either worshipping gods of wood and stone, or else such spiritual idols as their imaginations have fashioned, and with all these God is compassed about as with bees; but He does not destroy them: He still has patience, and still He cries, "Come unto Me; repent; believe in My Son, and you shall have eternal life." Truly "His mercy endures forever," if you think upon these things.

May not the endurance of divine grace be faintly pictured in the following scene? Out yonder, just beyond those grinding rocks, there is a vessel rolling and tossing on the jagged granite, and evidently going to pieces. See you not the mariners clinging to the masts? It is not possible that

they should escape except by help from the shore. The rocket apparatus has been used, and a rope is fastened to the vessel, and now a cradle is drawn along the rope. What joy! One man is safely landed, but the rope is weak, and it is doubtful whether it will bear the strain. Two at one time are clinging to the rope, and the ship is nearly broken up—will the rope bear them? The wind howls terribly, and the waves lash furiously—will the rope hold out? Another is venturing! Ah, see how the rope dips! The waves have gone over him. Will it be able to sustain his weight and save him? Now, we never have such anxiety concerning the salvation of souls by Christ Jesus, "for His mercy endures forever." The salvation of God brings every soul to shore that hangs on it, and, when the world is gone to wreck, free grace will bring all who trust it to the eternal shore! Should the biggest sinner out of hell hang upon that rope of mercy, it will bear him up, and bring him safely to land!

I would liken God's mercy to a great temple which strong men have sought to overturn with their utmost might. They have labored to overturn the two great pillars where the house leans. The ancient temple of the Philistines stood firm enough till an unexpected hero entered it—Samson felt for the pillars, and finding them, bowed himself with all his might, and the pillars snapped, and down came the house upon the Philistine lords, and Samson himself perished. Many a Samson-like sinner has gone into the temple of God's mercy, and bowed with all his might to overturn it, to see if he could not wear out the patience of God and blaspheme himself into swift damnation; and yet these bold and gigantic sinners have never been able to do this, but very frequently these very men have been subdued by divine grace, and have worshipped Him in the temple which they once sought to destroy. Yes, Philistia's house may bow, but the house of Jehovah stands fast, and "His mercy endures forever."

There is but one reflection to make the subject of the song complete, namely, that *the potency of God's mercy* in delivering His saints is equally immutable. He is always able to deliver His children, so that we may say in the language of the three holy children, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us out of the enemies' hands." There is no possibility that a child of God should be cast into a difficulty out of which the stretched out arm of Jehovah cannot bring him. He who brought His people of old from the brick kilns of Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea and the howling wilderness, will surely bring all His elect ones out of all their trials safely to their heavenly rest.

II. I now use the text as A SOLACE. We have many troubles, and we need comfort; God is willing that we should be comforted, for He says, "Comfort you, comfort you My people." Moreover, He has provided for it, for He has given us the Holy Spirit to be the Comforter.

I shall use the text as a solace as to the *past*. The year is all but gone. Have we not found, up till now, that His mercy has endured forever? If the stories of all could be told who are sitting here, I suppose a great roll of lamentation would need to be written, and around every roll we could bind the silken cord of mercy. Beloved, whether *you* will say it or not, I must, as the minister of such a congregation as this, involved in so many cares, with so many labors, and so much of anxiety pressing daily upon my soul, I must bless my God that up till now, to me, at any rate, His mercy has endured. It brought me to tears when you were singing just now—

"He His chosen race did bless
In the wasteful wilderness."

Yes, it is a wasteful wilderness to us; but He has blessed us; He has made it blossom like the rose where we expected nothing but weariness and barrenness. Blessed be God for the past. We will comfort ourselves with recollections of the past, because He will not change in His dealings. He who has helped us thus far will not forsake us. "Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice."

But the chief solace about the past lies in this—every right-minded Christian at the close of the year looks back upon his sins of omission and sins of commission. I shall not invite you to any lengthy confessions this morning, but which of us would not blush scarlet if his sins were known? Beloved, acknowledge them now into the ear of your God, and then remember that His mercy covers all. Whatever it may have been, His mercy covers all, and, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." I am no more a sinner than I was at the end of last year, and yet I have committed thousands of sins: there is no more in God's book against me than there was then—there was nothing then, blessed be His name, for the blood had cancelled all, there is nothing now, for the same atoning sacrifice has taken all my sin away. Come to the cross, my brothers and sisters, come to the cross again, and as you look up to the wounds of Jesus which bled for you, believe that "His mercy endures forever." Your sins, however innumerable, are cast behind His back, yes, thrown into the depths of the sea.

Our text is also a very sweet consolation as to *the present.* Have we, at this moment, a sense of present sin? Then, "His mercy endures forever." Our Lord comes to us, in the language of this text, girt with the towel, and bearing the pitcher, and the basin, and washes our feet yet again. From the accumulated dust of a year's journey He cleanses us. May you have no consciousness of sin, but on the contrary, a consciousness of reconciliation in the Beloved. But perhaps you have on your mind some spiritual disability. Perhaps you have been so disquieted at home, that you cannot concentrate your thoughts, and however the preacher may

try to bring you to the point, your mind is so disturbed that you cannot appreciate it; there is a fog in your soul as well as in the streets. Beloved, thank God our acceptance is not injured by our depressed state of mind: whether we are depressed or exalted, whether we are enjoying communion or not, we still stand in the beloved all fair and glorious in the sight of Him whose mercy endures forever!

Possibly you have come here today, and you have brought with you too much of yesterday's troubles. These ought not to come into the Sunday, for this is a day of rest. Still you cannot help it; you are beset with such daily anxiety, that while sitting here you have been mentally looking into your ledger, or nursing the sick child; your mind has been in the fields of vanity when it should have been on the mountain with God. Drive out your cares by remembering that "His mercy endures forever."—

"Come, make your needs, your burdens known;
He will present them at the throne;
And angel bands are waiting there,
His messages of love to bear."

You cannot be in such a difficulty that He cannot sustain you in it, or bear you out of it. "His mercy endures forever."

As to *the future*. Ah, we are poor fools when we begin to deal with the future! It is a sea which we are not called upon to navigate. The present is the whole of life, for when we enter into the future, it is the present. Yet, standing here this morning, I can conceive some who feel infirmities creeping over them, trembling with the foreboding, "What shall I do when I come to extreme old age? My friends are gone; I have none who are likely to care for me. When these fingers cannot perform their daily work, when my brow is wrinkled, and I can scarcely totter to my toil, what shall I do?" Ah, "His mercy endures forever." It does not stop at 70, nor pause at 80—it will bear you safely over 90, if your pilgrimage is so far prolonged. When I looked the other day upon a number of poor old men and women in the wards of the workhouse, some of whom had not risen from their beds at all for years, I thought to myself it was far better to die than so to live; and yet, if they had a good hope, I was mistaken, for if Christ should make that bed to become soft as downy pillows with His presence, there might be a glory in the workhouse, and a heaven in the midst of poverty, and they would there learn as well as anywhere, that "His mercy endures forever." "Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." Therefore trust in the Lord, and be not afraid, you whose days of weakness are coming, for He will not fail you nor forsake you.

We are sometimes alarmed at the prospect of the storms of life. They are not few. In the past they have been many—we may expect more. He who reckons upon smooth weather between this and the fair haven,

reckons without his head; but, beloved, come what tempest there may, "His mercy endures forever." There must have been some fear on board that mail steamer a few weeks ago when the tornado was thundering over the West Indies. The captain very wisely put on all steam and faced the wind; but with what anxiety must they have asked the question—"Will she have force enough to face such a mighty whirlwind? Can the engines keep up speed enough to battle with the hurricane?" The engines groaned, and every timber creaked as the good ship steamed right into the teeth of the tempest, sailing as it were between the very jaws of death and into the throat of the grave. Surely they whispered to one another, "Will she brave it out? She seems but a mere cockleshell in the midst of these huge Atlantic waves; will she be carried on the reef and dashed to pieces as hundreds of others have been, or will she conquer the furious blast?" When the good vessel kept her head to the wind, and pierced the waves, holding her own against such odds, there must have been great joy on board. You and I are in a nobler vessel, with her head to the tempest, Jehovah steers her, and we shall not only outlive the storm, but sail into port with all our colors flying, to the praise and glory of His name whose "mercy endures forever."

Looking forward to the future, there are some who say, "We are most of all alarmed because of far travels which we are expecting." Out of this congregation, a considerable number emigrate from year to year, called to a distance from friends and kinsfolk. Should that be your case, dear friend, is it not a comfort to think that God's mercy endures forever? Two friends agree never to go farther apart than they can communicate with one another by telegraph. One of them has crossed the Atlantic, and resides in the United States or in the far west, but still he has only to go to the office where a wire can be touched, and a message will flash to his friend in England, and tell him his needs. This is just the compact God has made with His people—they shall never go where there is not a telegraphic communication between them and Himself. You may be out at sea, or in Australia, but the communication of *prayer* is always open between your soul and God, and if you are commanded to ride on the wings of the morning to the uttermost parts of the sea, or if for a while you have to make your bed in the abyss—if you are His child, still will you be able to reach His heart. Neither distance, nor time, nor eternity itself, shall divide an heir of heaven from the mercy of God which endures forever!

I think I hear one say, "I am not looking forward to that, for I have no doubt I shall lay my bones among my brethren, but I have lost many friends, and others are pining with consumption, and are likely to be taken from me." This is a grief which occurs more often to us as we grow older. The young man may look upon his wife and children, and see his

father, and mother, and friends about him, but as sure as we are men, either we must go from them or they from us, for no unbroken families can long remain on earth; and the less of death we have had, the more is yet to come. We are those who have not drunk the cup; but we must and will drink it even to the dregs. What a comfort to know that we sorrow not as they who are without hope. If we lose our friends and dear ones in the Lord, we part to meet, and we meet to part no more. If they die, if our best beloved ones depart, yet "the Lord's mercy endures forever."

And this year some of us will die. As I look around here, I feel that truth most solemnly. The young *may* die; the old *must*. Some of us must tread the dark valley this year. It may be the preacher—there are many more unlikely things. It may be you—you young people. It may be any of us. Do we know the mercy of God? Then God forbid we should lift our little finger to have it otherwise, for His mercy will endure when the death dews lie cold on our brow; we shall find that last day to be no more dreadful than the ordinary days of life, yes, we shall perhaps be favored with such visions of angels, and such sights of the better land, that we shall be glad for evening, to undress that we may rest with God.

III. I wish we had time to use the text more fully in that light, but we have not; therefore, I shall come now, in the third place, and with much brevity, to use the text as A SERMON—a sermon with three heads.

1. "His mercy endures forever." Then, in the first place, *let our mercy endure*. Have you, during this year, or at any time previously, offended another or been offended, so that there is any ill-will in your mind between you and anyone? Then may I entreat you, as this is a most fitting day, at the close of the year, to end it at once! Even if we feel we have been grossly ill-treated, grossly insulted, yet now let the token of reconciliation be given by every one of us. Remember, you Christians *must* do it, or you are not Christians. You are nothing better than deceitful hypocrites if you harbor in your minds a single unforgiving thought. There are some sins which may be in the heart, and yet you may be saved, but you cannot be saved unless you are forgiving. "If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Those are Christ's own words. If we do not choose to forgive, we choose to be damned. Now, there is a good deal of lying about this. People will say, "Yes, I will forgive it, but I cannot forget it." You mean you do not forgive it! Everything like enmity must be renounced if you would be saved. When Mr. Wesley was going out to America with General Ogilvie, he heard a great storming and raging going on in the cabin—it was the general scolding his servant. He said, "I had so many bottles of Cypress wine put on board for me—the only wine I am allowed to drink—and that villain has drunk it all himself. I have put him in irons, and I am going to send him on board a man-of-war to be flogged, for I never forgive." "Well,"

said Mr. Wesley, "I hope you never sin." The inference was so irresistible that the general said, "Here, sir, take my keys. I forgive you this time." If we would be forgiven, let us forgive.

2. The second head of the sermon is this—if God's mercy endures forever, then let us learn *the duty of hoping for everybody.* You have no right to say of the poor fallen girl in the street, "Oh, it is no use looking after those outcasts, they always turn out badly before long." God's mercy endures forever; if you had any of it, you would not talk so. You have no right to say of the drunken man who has been reclaimed three or four times, but has gone back, "It is no use trying any more with him." brothers and sisters, "His mercy endures forever." Would you be more severe than your Maker? He bears with sinners—surely we may. Especially this ought to be so with our relatives and children. A mother's love must never burn out, and a father's patience never expire. Hope for the most hopeless. Till they are in hell, pray for them. Till they are in their graves, hope for them. Till they die, labor to bring them to Christ. God's mercy endures forever—let our tenderness endure.

3. And, in the third place, if God's mercy endures forever, then *see the duty of hoping for yourself.* If you have been ever so guilty, do not say, "There is no hope." "His mercy endures forever." Away with that whisper of Satan, "Too late"; it is not too late. So long as you desire Christ, it is not too late for Him to receive you. It will one day be too late, when life is over. Then will you hear those words, "Too late; you cannot enter now"; but it is not too late for repentance and faith to be accepted. Despair is sin—hope is the duty of man with regard to God. I pray you cast not yourself away. Till God has cast you into hell, have hope, and come to Christ!

IV. I cannot say more upon the sermon, time is gone; but the last head is A SUMMONS: "His mercy endures forever."

Is not that a most loving and tender summons to the wandering child to return to his Father; to the backsliding professor to approach his God; to the chief of sinners to humble himself before the mercy seat? There is mercy—seek it! There is mercy in Jesus—believe in Him! Bunyan tells us that Prince Emmanuel hung out the white flag upon Mount gracious. It is still there! Surrender, man, surrender today, and fight no more against yourself, and your eternal interests. Behold the white flag. You have but to trust your Lord, and leave your sin, and He will be merciful to you. When that man of God, Mr. Andrew Fuller, was once preaching in Scotland, the place was very crowded, and numbers were outside. A woman, the worst woman in the town, seeing the crowd, thought she would push into the Kirk to listen to the English minister. He was preaching from the text, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." "Ah," said she, "I have gone far, but I have not gone over the ends of the earth,

at any rate, and if God says, 'Look, and be saved, all the ends of the earth,' He must mean me." She did look, and became afterwards an honorable woman in that parish, converted by the grace of God.

On this last Sunday morning in the year, I solemnly present those same words as fresh from God's lips to every unconverted person here, "Look unto Christ, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." "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." May God bring you to obey that gentle summons to come to your heavenly Father and live!

Believers, the summons is also meant for you. It says this, "His mercy endures forever," therefore let your love to souls continue; let your labor for conversions abide; let your generosity to God's cause abound; let your endeavors to extend the kingdom of Christ endure evermore. At this season, let me say, enlarge your exertions. If you have done much, do more; if you have done little, be ashamed and begin afresh. If God's mercy continues forever, do not let us talk about resting and taking things easy. No, time is very precious; every hour has six wings, like a cherub, and flies like the lightning's flash. Let us live and work while we may, "for the night comes when no man can work."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
PSALMS 135 and 136.

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

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

By the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of
C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English,
and 574 Spanish translations, all free, visit:
www.spurgeongems.org

END VOLUME 13